

Kings To You

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/35022151) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/35022151>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Fandoms:	Minecraft (Video Game) , Dream SMP
Relationships:	Wilbur Soot & Technoblade & TommyInnit & Phil Watson , Technoblade & TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit , TommyInnit & Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF)
Characters:	TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Wilbur Soot , Eret (Video Blogging RPF) , Grayson Purpled (Video Blogging RPF) , Toby Smith Tubbo , Kristin Rosales Watson
Additional Tags:	Platonic Relationships , Alternate Universe , Alternate Universe - Superheroes/Superpowers , Villain Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Villain Wilbur Soot , Villain Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Villain TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Thief TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Avian TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Piglin Hybrid Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF) , Dark SBI , Possessive Behavior , Avian Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF) , Piglin Hybrid Wilbur Soot , Violence , Animal Instincts , Implied/Referenced Torture , no beta we die like men , Kidnapping , Unhealthy Relationships , Obsession , They're evil , ur honor , BAMF TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Morally Ambiguous Character , Non-Consensual Touching , Blood and Violence , Graphic Description of Corpses , Amputation , Suicidal Thoughts , Non-Consensual Drug Use , Loss of Limbs , Dark Toby Smith Tubbo , Platonic Possessive Sleepy Bois Inc
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Something Wicked This Way Comes , Part 1 of The Gambit
Collections:	Dream SMP fics that butter my bread , Beloved minecraft fics with dark stuff , Dark sbi fanfics (yay) , incomplete v good fics , favorites , fics in my SBI enderchest , Cross' Collection of DSMP/SBI fics (unfinished) , unfinished fics i adore!!! , sbi fics that butter my bread , Dsmf fics , so what im a tommyinnit kin , Dream SMP Fics (Mainly Tommy (Yeah I'm That Bitch)) , Possessive SBI fics have my <3 , insomnia personified , My absolute favorites <3 , wow i really am reading mc fanfiction 🥰🥰 , the best works i've ever read , Mcyt(mostly SBI) fics that I adore , Unfinished sbi fics , DSMP Fics in my Ultimate Quotebook , Mar's Big Library (dsmf) , Mar doesn't know how to handle this it's just so so so good , sbi fics i want to be read aloud at my funeral , fanfic for the soul <3 , fics that give me a will to live , the reason i'm an insomniac , and i will tell you that i love you again and again every day until you feel it to be true , dino's minecraft hyperfixations , Best of DSMP , hello yes i can't stop thinking about these works , Heart eye emoji , Dark Sbi to fuel my will to live , Yeah but we we though you were mental you were talking to trees! , I

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Stats:

Published: 2021-11-08 Updated: 2023-10-24 Words: 113,757 Chapters: 21/?

Kings To You

by [Flustered](#)

Summary

Technoblade stared down at Tommy, his red eyes nearly glowing in the darkness. "I don't think you've understood me, Theseus. You don't get to leave. You are mine."

Tommy knew Techno enough now that he was beyond stubborn. No matter how much Tommy would scream his protests until he was blue in the face, Techno would never listen. Well, guess what! Tommy was about to reverse uno card this bitch.

Tommy reached up, grabbing Techno's shirt and pulling him closer. Lightning flashed. He bared his teeth hissing out, "if I'm yours, you son of a bitch, then you're fucking mine too!" The thunder boomed, as if to seal the deal.

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In which the world class master thief Tommy Innit is given the ultimate challenge: steal a Technoblade.

It goes as bad as you'd think it would.

On indefinite hiatus

Notes

Title is a phrase from the Count of Monte Cristo.

This is my nanowrimo project of 2021. I don't even watch the CC (except technoblade bruh), so if any of them express their discomfort about this fic then it will be Thanos snapped out of existence. Please do not send it to them (why would you?!?).

I really wanted to create a Dark SBI fic where Tommy was an equal to the rest of the boys. And suddenly the possessive bastards can't all be like 'I'm taking you against your will' to an untrappable rabid child. They have to woo (propping a box open with a stick and hope Tommy is lured in by gapples) their newest family member.

All relationships are PLATONIC. Unbeta'd, we die like men.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Every story started with feet on the pavement, running to escape. The pounding rhythm of each step, the thump-thump of a heart beat, and the quick and steady breaths were the only things that they could hear. Running from heroes and villains alike, escaping to live another tale. That is how every narrative begins in a world of unexplainable powers and the infinite struggle against good and evil.

But in this story, Tommy waltzed.

The comforting weight of headphones were lowered onto his ears, and Tommy paused to flick through his playlists before stopping his gloved thumb on one labeled '*museum heists.*' He shuffled the music, placing the device back into a secured pouch on his side. He gave himself a few seconds to hear the soft sound of violins being gently plucked. Carmen: Habanera began to fill the silence.

It felt powerful to listen to classical music while breaking into a historical place. Tommy curled out from the shadows and dropped down from the ceiling. His legs ached slightly after crouching in a small space for hours, and it felt good to stretch. The violins began to swell, a rocking rhythm swaying and repeating.

Thick soled boots took the first step of Tommy's dance, and began to glide across the tiled ground. Not just purely for aesthetics, as powerful as it was to sway and dance in a darkened museum Tommy had a very good reason. Some of the tiles had weight sensors underneath. With every step of the circling waltz he avoided the traps, and Tommy was delighted as the music surged and crescendoed.

Ba-duh-duh-duh! The string and brass instruments chanted in time with each other.

The music softened, swaying to the melody as Tommy reached into one of his pouches and pulled out a white handkerchief. Without rhyme or reason, he tossed it over his shoulder casually. It landed in a crumpled heap, but Tommy simply moved forwards. Stepping in time with the beat of the song.

There was a long pause as a trumpet lingered on a note, and Tommy stopped by a corner. Then with the music returning to its sway, he leaned over to note that the camera was facing the other direction. With ease he slipped underneath it as it slowly turned, waiting for it to peer down the other side of the hallway before he continued down his path.

The museum had helpfully labeled with bright signs which direction to go. And Tommy silently stepped down the hall that an arrow labeled 'paintings' was. He paused only twice more, scanning for the camera's sight-line before ducking and weaving.

The music crescendoed one last time before the song ended, just as Tommy stepped into the large exhibit of renaissance paintings.

In the Hall of the Mountain King began to play next, and it gave Tommy an exhilarated feeling in his soul as he hunched over and crept across the floor. Damn, Spotify was popping off, it gave him the best song for this. The cellos softly plucking out the sneaky tune darkly as he moved over to his target. A stunningly beautiful painting was hung on the wall.

There was an impressive amount of security for the artwork. It was an Monet, worth millions if auctioned off correctly. The cellos were joined by a few plucks of a violin, and Tommy crept closer, twisting his feet and weight as he dodged the numerous weight sensors. A flute began to curl into the music, and Tommy reached into his pouch to draw out a small device. With a click it began to hum slightly, and the emergency lights dotting the ceiling went out.

The cameras and the motion detectors were resetting themselves, and Tommy lurched forwards and grabbed the painting off the wall. A wire connecting to the wall came with it. With another quick step Tommy pulled out a wire-cutter and used it to strip back the plastic. The cords were exposed and Tommy brought out yet another tool as the music began to surge louder and louder. A small clamp was attached to the metal, and the clamp beeped quietly. The current was looped through the clamp, leaving Tommy able to cut it off from the painting's frame.

No alarm was triggered as Tommy flipped it gently onto its back. Crouching over it, he used a razor to rip open the back of the painting. The destroyed security connecting to the wire wrapped around the back of the painting, but Tommy ignored it as he cut it out too. All that was left was the thick canvas of the painting, and with gentle hands Tommy pulled it out of its prison. The music peaked as the whole orchestra began to play. Drums beat out the tune, the brass began to blare, the string instruments screeched, and Tommy grinned as he placed the painting in the reinforced tube. He strapped it to his back as the song ended in its final fury.

Tommy checked his watch.

He still had time.

What else could he steal? Another soft song began to play, the melody unfamiliar enough that Tommy didn't recognize it immediately. He tuned out the music as background noise as he studied the room. Taking another painting would be a mistake, he didn't have another tube to keep it safe while he transported it. Instead Tommy slunk across the room and exited it.

There he found a lovely Egyptian exhibit. And much to Tommy's delight, there was an impressive set of jewels encased in a glass box. He crept over and disabled the sensors before taking his lockpicks to the glass case. It tried to fight against Tommy, but he was a lock whisperer. And it gave up as fast as Tommy attacked it.

Swiping the gold and jewels into a pouch, Tommy checked the time once more. He sighed, glancing across the room to a golden scepter. His time was nearly up. He could have gotten it as well, but Tommy really didn't like to push his luck sometimes.

He tiptoed back the way he came. Pausing a few times. A vending machine was lit up, and Tommy perused at the selection. Oh! They had Doritos. He pulled out a crumpled up dollar

bill and shoved it into the machine. It took a few tries before it accepted the distressed bill, and a bag of cool ranch Doritos dropped into Tommy's hand.

Poggers.

Another quick stop was at a water fountain. It was decades old, encrusted with hard water around the nozzle and where it met the wall. Tommy had used these for years when he went to school, and he grinned as he touched the mouth guard. It moved freely, and Tommy pointed the spigot away from the drain and out into the middle of the room. He held his hand on the large button on the side of the fountain, watching as the water shot in an arc onto the floor.

He let go of the button when a large puddle had formed, and Tommy leisurely walked down the hallway. He paused, staring down at a tile he knew for a fact that had a pressure sensor underneath it.

And very deliberately trod on it.

He had a minute and forty seconds.

Tommy pulled his headphones down, the background sound of the music fading away until he turned it off. He let the headphones rest around his neck as he turned his focus onto the bag of Doritos. He shook it, hearing the chips rustle in the plastic. Without popping the bag, he crushed the contents inside.

With a distracted hum, Tommy could See-

-thump of boots hitting the floor, "caught you red-"

- "on't want to fight you, big man." Tommy's voice rang out, muffled but-

-his hand flicking out and throwing the handkerchief, the cloth expanding wide as it landed on the masked-

-A kick was aimed at his torso-

-his fist holding the axe let go-

-shriek of surprise as his foot landed in the pool of water-

-the tube holding the priceless painting rolling across the floor-

-Tommy laughed.

Tommy hummed, waiting for the minute and forty seconds to end.

It came fast enough. Tommy started forwards, only making a few feet as he heard something whiz past his head. There was a crash as a window broke, and he heard the thump of boots hitting the floor, "caught you red handed, bastard."

Tommy whirled around, his hands coming up to block the incoming hit. He ducked under the punishing fist, leaping backwards to avoid yet another kick coming at him. "Stop moving!" Sapnap growled out frustrated. Tommy evaded the attacks easily.

"Sapnap," another voice joined in, and Tommy spun to face the second member of his favorite trio. Wearing a lime green hoodie that was reinforced more than a bullet proof vest and a flat circular mask that was stronger than fuckin netherite. There was a badly drawn smile written on it with a sharpie.

Tommy would know. He was the one who pinned Dream down after telling him that he looked fucking intimidating without a face and drew it on there.

Dream had kept it on, which was a pleasant surprise.

"Dream!" Tommy kept his voice light and cheery, "what a crazy coincidence, meeting you here. No Gogy today? Shame."

"Hello Red. Are you seriously trying to steal from a museum? You're slipping, an alarm was triggered."

Tommy put one hand to his chest in mock offense. "Me? Breaking and entering? I would never! This place is open to the public. Can't a guy walk into a museum and buy a snack from a vending machine?" He held up the bag of cool ranch Doritos.

"During daylight hours you can," Sapnap replied sarcastically.

Tommy checked the watch on his arm, letting out an exaggerated gasp. "I thought it was noon. Although it does explain why the place seems so empty." His voice echoed down the dark corridors.

"Cut it the theatrics," Sapnap butted in, "I have a date tonight and I want to be on time." He bounced on the back of his heels, ready for the banter to end. Tommy pouted from underneath his mask, he liked bantering.

"You have a date?" Tommy asked, "that's cool. Where are you going?"

Sapnap brightened, "oh we're going to go see that new movie. You know, Manhunt 7?"

Tommy nodded, "oh yeah, I know the one you're talking about. I saw it the day it came out."

Dream coughed unexpectedly, "you like watching those kinds of movies?" His voice was tight and squeaky.

Tommy nodded, "oh yeah. I don't watch them really for the story. I like the actors a lot more. You know the main character is played by Clay Taken? The guy's eyes are, no offense," Tommy gestured at Dream, "dreamy." Tommy laughed at his own joke.

"You like Clay Taken?" Sapnap seemed to be thrilled by the idea. Dream got very, very quiet.

Tommy laughed, “it’s more like I love bad cheesy movies. And somehow he’s a star in all of them. He’s like the Adam Sandler for bad comedy movies except better.” Tommy replied, “anyways Manhunt 7 is a good one. I liked it a lot better than Manhunt 3, that’s for certain. It made me cry at the end.”

“Oh there is a sad part?”

“Yeah, I won’t spoil it for you though. It really surprised me.”

“Damn, my date doesn’t like sad movies. He cries at the drop of a hat.” Sapnap seemed to wilt slightly.

“It’s still an excellent movie.” Tommy said comfortingly, “I would still recommend it.”

There was a cough, and Tommy and Sapnap turned to Dream. “We can talk about Sapnap’s dating life another time, guys.”

“Right,” Tommy nodded, “maybe next time. Let me know how it goes, buddy.”

Sapnap nodded, “so that means you’ll let us take you in, so I can be on time to my date, right?”

Tommy laughed, “probably not.”

Then Sapnap brought his fists up. They burst into fire, the light crackling and popping suddenly. “I guess we have to do this the hard way.”

“I don't want to fight you, big man.” Tommy’s voice rang out, muffled but he raised his fists too. Dream pulled out an axe from his hoodie, the thing was basically a bag of holding, and it glinted with a purple light.

“Then just give up,” Dream replied evenly.

Tommy paused, tilted his head to consider it, then said, “nah.” And he launched himself back into the air, his body twisting and flipping. He could feel the heat of Sapnap’s fists coming closer, and Tommy twisted himself at a nearly impossible angle for his fingers to snatch at a cloth.

When he pushed himself back onto his feet, his legs folded down into a crouch as Sapnap's fire brushed past his head. Tommy launched himself upwards, his hand flicking out and throwing the handkerchief, the cloth expanding wide as it landed on the masked face.

Sapnap sputtered as his vision was obscured, giving Tommy enough time to attack. Tommy was not a strong individual. He lamented the fact that he could not put a lot of strength into his punches or kicks. But he was fast and precise. His ring and middle fingers were pressed together as he sank them into Sapnap's biceps.

The Blaze hybrid stumbled back awkwardly, giving Tommy even more time to press his fingers into his stomach and into one of his thighs in a swift move. It took less than two seconds, and Sapnap fell onto the floor with a deep, “*oof*.”

“I can’t feel my leg,” the fallen hero complained sourly.

But the fight was not over.

While Tommy was distracted taking his partner down, Dream was still a threat. A kick was aimed at his torso and it was Tommy’s turn to stumble back. Sapnap groaned, nearly underneath Tommy’s feet. He felt a hot hand latch onto his ankle.

“Woah!” Tommy was nearly taken off his feet by the action, wobbling to keep his balance. He saw the flash of the purple axe, and Tommy turned, holding out the bag of Doritos like a shield with both hands.

“What-?” Dream hesitated, and Tommy *squeezed*.

The bag of Doritos exploded, the top popping pop with a crack and the dust of delicious goodness filled the air. It covered Dream, making the hero stumble back as Dorito dust made him cough and wheeze, his fist holding the axe let go.

Sapnap screeched as the axe dropped and sank two inches into the floor near his leg.

“*Dream!* I’m right here!”

“Sorry!”

Tommy kicked Sapnap’s hand off and he was on the attack. Dream was off kilter, stumbling backwards as he tried to avoid Tommy’s hands. “Stay still, Dream.” Tommy huffed, pushing forwards as the leader of the heroes moved backwards.

“I’d rather not, thanks.” Dream responded, dodging yet another two fingered stab from Tommy. “I think-” he was going to say more but he was cut off with a shriek of surprise as his foot landed in the pool of water and sent him sprawling down.

Tommy pounced on him like a lion, deadening Dream’s limbs until the hero could not move. “Fuck!” Dream cursed, unable to move from the puddle on the ground.

Tommy straightened, laughing victoriously. Then he felt a tap on his shoulder and he turned just in time to see a fist descend on his face. He let out a surprised grunt as it knocked him back, nearly falling onto Dream from the strength of the attack. It loosened the strap around his shoulder, and Tommy turned suddenly as he saw the tube holding the priceless painting rolling across the floor with a bounce.

“Gotcha,” Sapnap grinned, shakily standing on one leg while the other was barely holding him up. He went to punch Tommy again, but the thief ducked under the attack and shoved Sapnap down.

Not taking a chance this time, Tommy punched at the nerves in Sapnap’s other leg. He had missed one. “Dammit Red,” Sapnap cursed him, “I’m going to be late because I can’t stand up.”

Tommy shrugged, “I *was* going to leave you one for your date. But then you punched me, you shithead,” he pouted. He turned away from Sapnap’s futile curses, stepping towards

where his prize had fallen. He looped the tube back around his shoulders, and turned towards his favorite heroes.

“See you next time, guys!” Tommy spun around, “give Gogy my love.”

“Will do,” Dream groaned flatly, “see you later, Red.”

Tommy didn’t waste his time escaping. Climbing out the broken window and out into the night air. With each step Tommy delighted in his victory. Yet another win for the big man!

When he had made it far away from the museum, ducking and dodging all of the cameras and pedestrians that still wandered about Esempi, Tommy laughed.

Primes, Tommy loved his job.

The call came on an innocent Tuesday afternoon later that month. Honestly, Tommy should have been fucking hyper aware, only bad things happened on Tuesdays. But it had been a glorious week after watching Dream trip over a homeless man and Tommy had been feeling very generous. Just the memory of Dream’s surprised cry as he smashed his shitty masked face into the ground made Tommy cackle. So his hackles were down, so to speak.

He should have known. Fucking Tuesdays.

The hammock swayed gently as Tommy rocked back and forth, admiring the jewels that he had liberated (stolen) away. He loved every piece that fell into his hands, but he only allowed the very *very* special ones to remain in his collection. These bracelets with glittering sapphires were not good enough, and Tommy would admire them until he sold them some time later this week. Only the best could be kept in his nest.

His phone buzzed in his pocket. Tommy didn’t let his eyes leave the silver and gems in his hand as he fished it out of his pocket and flipped the phone open with a snap of his wrist. “Yo,” he grunted out. He only gave his number out to three people. His worn flip phone was bought years ago at some dumb and grimy convenience store, and he would destroy it in a heart beat if it was compromised.

“Hey R man,” Purpled’s voice crackled over the tinny speakers. “Listen, I got this job for you.”

Tommy hummed, “is it going to be boring?”

Purpled laughed as if Tommy wasn’t deadly serious. If it was just some dumb cat burglar robbery that some two-bit thug wanted, Tommy wasn’t interested. Even if they could pay his price, Tommy had a reputation that he painstakingly built that allowed him to turn down jobs that kings would send him. If it wasn’t fucking cool, Tommy didn’t care.

“Believe me, Red. This is a wild job. I heard about it from the grape vine long before they even contacted me. Everybody thinks this guy is *nuts*. He’s asking for a job in the Empire.”

Tommy paused, tilting his head as he thought. “The Antarctica Empire?”

“That’s the one.”

“The Antarctica Empire that is run by the Syndicate, the most feared and powerful supervillains capable of starting the apocalypse? That Empire?”

“Yup.” Purpled popped the ‘p.’

“The Empire that has locked it’s borders since the previous government was overthrown nearly two decades ago. Infamous for the fact that nobody goes in and gets out. Also known for it’s very low crime rate because if anybody does anything illegal they’re, like, killed?” Tommy’s voice was getting higher as he spoke.

“Uhuh, that’s it.”

“Fuck, that sounds like fun. What’s the job about?” Tommy kicked back onto his nest, throwing the jewels onto the blankets around him. His wings rustled with excitement. Getting to sneak into the Empire and steal some shit under the noses of the worst supervillains on the planet sounded epic.

“There is a head official in charge of their army. He’s called General Technoblade.”

“Tech-no-blade.” Tommy sounded the word out. “What loving mother would call their child Technoblade?”

“I have no idea if that’s actually his real name or not.” Purpled confessed, “but he’s the job.”

Tommy paused, “excuse me?”

“He’s the job.”

“I heard you the first time, bitch boy. What about him is the job? Do I need to steal his car keys? Or his wallet?”

“No, no.” Purpled argued, “he *is the job*. You need to steal the general.”

“Huh.” Tommy paused. “That’s called kidnapping.”

“Yep.”

“You want me to kidnap... a full grown man? Who is in charge of the army of the most powerful country on Earth?”

“Crazy, right?”

Tommy let out a crazed laugh, “no wonder nobody has touched the job. What is the payment for this clusterfuck?”

“You won’t believe it, but they said the payment is a nether star.”

Tommy let out a whistle of appreciation. “A nether star? At least the bastards know that this job would be insane to do without good incentive.”

Purpled’s voice hummed, “that’s why I called you. Didn’t you say you wanted one a while ago?”

“That was before I found out you had to kill a wither to get one.” Tommy pointed out.

“Listen, I’m just a thief. I’m not a kidnapper. What would I do, offer him nuke codes to lure him into a white van?”

“You are one of the best thieves in the world.” Purpled responded, “if anybody could do this, it’s you.”

“Please, like it’s hard?”

“You are the one who managed to steal the Egg. *The Egg.*”

“I will say this again. Please, like it’s hard?”

Purpled made a noise of frustration. “The Egg was literally taking over the planet. All of the world leaders were on the same phone call making plans on what to do to neutralize the threat. And you just waltzed in there and just- stole it!”

Tommy shrugged nonchalantly. “I did not waltz in. I was chained up and about to be sacrificed.” At the time it wasn’t very funny at all. Tommy was on a pedestal, strapped down, with a knife over his head about to be killed for a ruby egg. Looking back at it now, Tommy had it in the bag. He was the biggest man ever. He had escaped with his prize without a sweat.

Nobody witnessed his mental breakdown. Legally that meant he was fine, no trauma at all.

“You gift wrapped the Egg and then gave it to Dream.”

“He appreciated it. After he stopped screaming, *‘holy shit what the fuck’* over and over again.”

“Listen. Out of everybody in the whole world, I think you can do this job. It doesn’t involve a hand off or anything. The guy just wants the general to disappear for a few days. You dope the guy up on enough weakness potions, hideout for three days, and then just let him go.” Purpled pushed on, “sneak in, sneak out, bada-bing bada-boom you have a nether star.”

Tommy hesitated. Purpled did make a good point. It would be a really easy job. Despite the risks, Tommy could probably do it within a week. “I’ll do it.” Tommy decided, “but on one condition.”

“What’s the condition?”

“You steal one of your brother’s projects for me.”

There was a pause, before Purpled let out a sigh of defeat. “Fine. Deal.”

Tommy grinned. “It’s a pleasure doing business with you, Purpled.”

“Same to you, Red.”

Tommy hung up, sitting up in his nest and pulled his laptop from where it was hidden under a few pillows. He typed in his password (*manywivesloveme*) and pulled up a google page. He typed in ‘General Technoblade,’ and clicked on the first link that appeared.

He had to start researching for his next heist.

Tommy wished he could go back in time and smack himself silly for even agreeing to it.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

takes a sip from a mug

That was some good serotonin.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Snow fucking sucks.

When Tommy had arrived in the Empire, he had seen the low hanging clouds and the bitter chill of the wind, and thought nothing of it. He had been around snow before, and he knew how dangerous it was to get caught in the cold while he lived on the streets. But it had been a long time since he was homeless, and Business Bay had mild winters. Although Tommy hadn't been home in a long time, spending his days in L'Manburg.

Well. It was New L'Manburg now.

The old one was shitty.

It had been such a long time since Tommy had to deal with snow, let alone the two and a half feet of it, that he felt completely out of his depth. He shivered hard, his breath coming out in white smoke as he pushed forwards.

Tommy blinked twice, letting a vision flutter through his head. He stopped for a brief second, adjusting his course further into the wild trees and the endless cold. He shuffled onwards, trusting that he will get out of here.

He had to.

Snow was silent. It didn't thunder down like rain, or whip and make the trees groan like the wind did. It was perfectly quiet, muting the world around Tommy as he moved forwards. Even the sound of his feet sliding through the snow, he was too exhausted now to take steps, was muffled. The only sound he could hear was his labored breathing, and the soft breaths of the man flung over Tommy's shoulder.

Tommy fell. The weightless feeling of flight soared through him, and it ended as quickly as it came as Tommy landed on the ground. His knees ached slightly, but it was *worth it* as Purpled jerked suddenly and screeched.

“Red, what the hell?” Purpled stumbled backwards and leaned on the table. His hand flying up to clutch onto his purple sweater. “Why can't you ever use a door?”

Tommy snuck his way into Punz' shop just to scare his friend. Could he have used the door? Yes. Did he want to? No.

"Doors are for pussies." Tommy replied, brushing off some dirt from his shoulder nonchalantly. "Only real men use the vents to get around."

Purpled gave him a deadpan stare, "one of these days I will stab you. And I won't feel guilty. Not one bit."

Tommy laughed, "I would love to see you try."

"Is that a challenge?" Purpled asked lightly, a glint in his eye.

"No!" Tommy replied a little too quickly. "I was referencing the, uh, new suit you gave me?" Tommy gestured to the red and black ensemble that he wore.

Black flexible pants with dozens of pockets sewn on it, with dark kneecaps glinting in the light. The shirt matched color with his pants, but it was made of a material that was a bit thicker. A large light red jacket was thrown over it all, only halfway zipped up. It nearly fell off Tommy's shoulder, but he loved this jacket more than he loved Henry. Fireproof, bullet resistant, and made for Tommy's insane flexibility. His mask was red, covering his entire head and down his neck. It had a little black mask sewn where his eyes were, making Tommy look like a raccoon.

(He did not cry when Punz gave it to him.)

(It was raining indoors.)

"Right, right." Purpled rolled his eyes. "Whatever you say, big R."

"Anyways," Tommy coughed into his hand, "where is... the prototype? The one that I'm totally borrowing, and going to give back sometime soon."

"I swear if you don't then Punz will *kill me* ." Purpled moved walking to one of the other tables in the room. "I had to sneak it out."

"I should be done with this job by the end of the week. Will he notice it is gone by then?"

"Depends." Purpled shrugged, "he's been busy making 404 some new goggles. Turns out the last ones were too buggy." He waved his hand to the table.

And Tommy... wasn't impressed.

The iron cuff sitting on the table looked scuffed up. Runes were melted into the hard metal. The lock on it wasn't very secure either, lying crooked and didn't clasp seamlessly.

"Huh." Tommy picked it up in one hand, staring at it. "I just sort of thought it'd be... made out of diamond or some shit."

Purpled huffed annoyed, “we tried that. Hell, we even tried a netherite cuff at one point. Punz screamed when it exploded when the enchantments failed.”

Tommy opened the hinge on the cuff, wincing slightly as it squeaked weakly. The metal was battered and honestly, couldn’t hold anything against their will. Tommy could literally wriggle it hard enough for it to unlock itself. “Are you sure-”

“Yes.” Purpled crossed his arms. “That is our best prototype. When the enchantment is activated then it can’t come off.”

“Cool. Well.” Tommy set it back down. “How do I use it?”

Purpled rolled his eyes again. “It’s a cuff. You put it on your target and you say their full name and then tell them what to do.”

“That’s it?”

“That’s it.” Purpled repeated.

“It’s a mind control enchantment on a cuff.”

“It’s a mind control enchantment on an experimental piece of shit cuff that probably will break if you use it too many times.” Purpled picked it up and shoved it into Tommy’s hands. “I’m letting you use it because I googled General Technoblade and the guy is a bloodthirsty monster who beheads people in the streets.”

“You saw that video too, huh?” Tommy weakly replied, thinking back on the research he stumbled upon last night.

“You’re not much of a fighter-”

“Hey!”

“-but you’re my friend, Red.” Purpled said. “And I don’t like the idea of you being locked up with a guy like that for three days. Even if you’ll drug him. So... just be careful.”

“You’re just scared because you get money for contacting me on behalf of others.” Tommy teased, but he took the cuff and slid it into his pocket.

Purpled punched him on the arm. “That too.”

“How many times before it’ll break?” Tommy asked.

“The last one we worked on worked up to six separate activations. You can say as many commands each time you say their name, and the person wearing it has to comply. But once you activate the cuff too many times it’ll just snap into pieces. Your’s is the newest one, so it might work more than six times, but don’t put your faith in it.” Purpled leaned onto one of the tables that was filled with cut fabric. “How much did you find about the target?”

Not a lot.

Tommy had scoured the internet of General Technoblade. The Antarctic Empire was closed off, and that also lessened the amount of traffic talking about the guy. There were a few photos of the man. Tall, pink hair, dressed like a pirate. He even wore a *crown*.

Tommy wasn't sure how that flew when the rulers of the Empire were supervillains that didn't take too kindly to others claiming their property. Even if it was symbolic. He thought that crowns were a thing that, like, kings wore. (Schlatt wore one. Fuck him.) General Technoblade worked with the rulers, so they must've been fine with the fashion choice.

Besides that, there wasn't a lot of information. He looked at old forms, dating twenty years ago, right before the government fell to the villains. And all he could glean was Technoblade was a very, very good warrior. He lived in the castle (because people still lived in a *castle* in the year of our poggiest lord and savior 2021). There was gossip that he *liked* to hunt wither skulls in the nether. He is a piglin hybrid, and he was rumored to have a brother but nobody could confirm if that was true. He is known to be the executioner of any criminal that he finds.

The guy was a tank.

There was a video that Tommy found about twenty pages into google's algorithm. It was about forty seconds long, the quality of the camera was a bit sketchy, and Tommy decided that *yeah* he was going to have to get some weakness potions for this. The muted colors on the screen depicted about six different men scattered across the room. A few were playing cards on the table, while the others were smoking in the corner. The door was kicked in, the force of it throwing it onto the ground and it slid several feet away before crashing into the wall.

General Technoblade was huge. Even with a shitty camera, Tommy could see that he was built like a brick. A sword was in his hand, the only sign of it's existence was how the light flashed across the blade as Technoblade slaughtered each man. It took only ten seconds. A dark cape swished in the air as he turned and left, and the video ended.

Tommy restarted the video. Again and again, he watched as each man died. Frame by frame. Pausing as blade sliced and cut and as blood spilt and gushed.

"I found a few things." Tommy replied, "I think I can handle it. Anyways- do you want a souvenir from the Empire?"

Purpled laughed, "hell yeah. Get me one of those t-shirts. The ones that say 'I broke into the Antarctica Empire and all I got was prison time and this t-shirt.'"

"I was thinking of one of those key chains. Or a snowglobe." Tommy teased back.

"Oh yeah. Get me the shittiest one you can find."

"Deal."

Despite what Purpled said, getting into the Antarctic Empire was *easy*. He thought getting past the barbed wires, the numerous checkpoints, and the dogs was going to be a challenge. He had heard horror stories from those who tried to save family and friends. The tales of them never getting out that ended with bloodshed. Instead, all Tommy had to do was pull up google maps and a few hiking guides. Badabing badaboom, he was in.

The forest was stunning. One of the largest in the world that was mostly untouched by humanity. It was a national park that two nations shared, the bigger half was the Empire, wherein the smaller half belonged to Bosnia. Bosnia was technically a part of the Empire, a tiny little strip of land that was a colony that belonged to them. They, however, had open borders and a friendly disposition to outsiders. The biggest attraction to visiting tourists, and the main economy of Bosnia, was the large national parks with sprawling forests, towering mountains, and cracking icecaps.

Tommy had to hand it to them, the place was beautiful. But it also had a gap in the defenses of the most powerful country in the world. The border between the two was several dozen miles from the nearest tourist attraction, a pretty little waterfall, and there was practically no security. No cameras, walls, armed guards, or dogs. It was practically a bright neon arrow sign pointing reading 'THIS WAY' to Tommy.

Admittedly, it was above a sheer cliff above a dark chasm.

But that never stopped him before!

Walking through the forest was the hardest part. There were several times where Tommy had to stop and adjust his course when he felt like he was going the wrong way. But after walking from nearly dawn till dusk, Tommy reached the border.

Google maps did not show exactly how tall the cliff was. And as Tommy craned his head backwards, he had to admit that maybe that was the exact reason why there weren't armed guards here.

Night rose up like a beast, snaking it's way into the shadows and stealing away the light and peaceful forest that Tommy had traveled in today. It was the end of fall, and the little warmth in the air was being replaced with a dangerous chill. There were still wild beasts out here. And most of them were nocturnal. Tommy has to keep moving.

He slipped his bag onto the ground, allowing himself a few moments to stretch without the weight on his back. Tommy knew how to get up the cliffs. But it would be very difficult in his human form. Instead he pulled back his sleeve to reveal a thick black cord around his wrist. The enchanted bracelet gave off a small amount of warmth. With a twist of his fingers it fell away from his arm.

The illusion of a human was gone. In Tommy's place was a hybrid. His bright shining brass wings stretched out behind him as he stretched. The enchantment on his bracelet wasn't a very powerful one, which allowed Tommy to slide under the radar. It simply made his wings disappear. He could still feel them. But the sensation was like he had a thick blanket on them. It allowed him to put on t-shirts without having the hassle of two wings in the way, which

was very pog. He placed the bracelet in his pocket carefully before picking up the bag he dropped.

Flying was distinctly an avian advantage. And it wouldn't be very possible for the others to use this path to escape the Empire. But it suited Tommy just fine.

(There was a reason why avians did *not* go into the Empire. It was claimed territory. And if the ruler of the Empire caught wind of Tommy visiting-

-it would not end well.)

Tommy flapped twice to warm up before he soared. Crossing the chasm and using the air currents to touch down on top of the cliff. He took a second to hide his wings once more before he strolled into the most dangerous country in the world.

It was like taking candy from a baby.

There was a constant beat behind his eyes. It matched the tempo with his heartbeat. Slow and dangerous, as he stalked through the hallways. He paused before each window, stretching out a hand and testing the barrier. The lock did not give way, and Techno walked onwards. His route was the same each time he canvassed the hallways. Some part of him, his logical reasoning, said he shouldn't take the same route. But he could not stand the thought of missing a doorway. In the time that it took him to sweep the castle, it could be breached.

He had to protect what was his.

A change of guards had happened since he was last in this hallway. Techno stared at them silently, his face a blank mask as his red eyes found faults. The nameless men shifted uncomfortably, but none of them made eye contact. Their blue uniforms were crisp and clean. The weapons were well maintained, a sword strapped to their waists and a gun clipped to their belt.

The next sound in the hallway was the soft sigh of a sword being pulled from its sheath. The guards stiffened, but they did not move from their positions. Techno pressed the blade underneath one of the guard's chins. The man gulped, but did not say a word. The press of the blade was not meant to cut, but to push. Techno raised his weapon until the man was nearly standing on his toes. And then the sharp blade was taken away. Leaving the trembling man behind.

"Don't slouch." Techno rumbled, before he moved on. The cape he wore swayed with the motion, barely brushing up against his heels.

He paused at another window, testing the latch, and then continued on his patrol. He went down the stairs, checking the doors as he went. Moving on to the throne room, where he peered at the stained glass window high up in the wall. The urge to take it down itched at him like a thorn in his side. He needed to replace it with something sturdier. Something that would prevent people from breaking in. But Phil and Wilbur told him that they *liked* it and Techno refrained from tearing it down.

But only just.

He moved on, slowly making his way past the kitchens. He tested the door handles, each of them turning before the lock stopped it. He worked his way back up the stairs, until he found himself standing in the royal wing.

The soft song of a guitar filled the air from Wilbur's room. Techno stopped his patrol to stand outside his brother's room. The song was not familiar, but it was enchanting nonetheless. A soft hum followed the strum of notes.

The pounding behind Techno's eyes suddenly felt like a jackhammer. The pain he had been repressing was suddenly at the forefront of his brain. He closed them, and it only lessened the agony slightly.

Techno stood there. Listening to his brother's soft murmur and for a moment he allowed himself to *want*. The sweet call for his bed was enticing. To stop and to rest was a physical ache. And a part of him, one that he rarely listened to, wanted to open the door to Wilbur's room. A faint memory of the two of them laying curled up together in the same bed rose, but he repressed it.

"Hey mate," a hand reached out and touched Techno's shoulder. Techno opened his eyes silently, turning to find Phil standing next to him. "You're looking a bit tired. Are you almost ready to stop?"

Techno thought about it. Silently weighing the pros and cons. The pros, he would be able to rest. But he could feel the energy still writhing within him. The anxiety combined with a burning drive made him jittery at the thought of stopping. He could not end his patrol.

He is a piglin hybrid. More specifically, he is a piglin brute hybrid. Even during the hibernation season they patrolled their bastions, protecting the slumbering women and runts. The need to protect, to ensure that the castle was still standing, was too strong. But the pull of sleep and rest was strong too. Making it absolute hell on earth for Techno when his instincts warred with each other. Techno had to physically exhaust himself to the point of being numb before he could slumber.

"No." Techno replied.

Phil didn't seem surprised by the refusal. "Alright, I was just checking. Try not to terrorise my guards any more than you have to. I heard that you made three of them cry already."

Techno grunted. "Keeps them on their toes."

Phil gave one of his sly amused smiles, the kind that meant that Techno said something amusing. "That's one way of saying it. How much longer do you think you'll be until you hibernate?"

Techno paused, "maybe a day or two more."

Phil reached up and touched Techno's hair. Fiddling with his braid. Preening. "Then why don't you go outside for a minute? The castle is too tense when you keep making your rounds."

Techno hummed, pondering the idea. The thought of going outside wasn't necessarily bad, but it gave him a bad taste. What if Wilbur and Phil were not safe? His territory needed his constant patrol. What if somebody forgot to lock one of the windows, and it left his sounder vulnerable?

Phil could sense his turmoil. "I'll let you borrow some of my jewels for your rest." Phil kept an impressive collection of stunning treasure. When Techno and Wilbur were younger they would raid it often. Now Techno had his own stash of golden trinkets. But it was not the same as his father's.

The idea of slumbering with his father's gold draping around him was appealing. It made his chest rumble.

"I'll be back." Techno agreed reluctantly, "do not open a window."

Phil gave him a brilliant smile, "I wouldn't dream of it, mate."

Chapter End Notes

slyly pulls back a curtain to reveal a bottle What's this? There is a 'Technoblade struggles with his piglin instincts' trope? Don't worry, I'll only sprinkle in a little-
accidentally drops the whole bottle into the fic oops.

Unbeta'd.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy stood in a plaza. When he had imagined what life was in the Antarctica Empire, he thought everything would have been sad and gray. He thought people would be hunched over, wearing dirtied and ripped clothes, all of them sent off to work in factories to supply the Empire with endless weapons. He had expected murder in the streets, smoke from numerous fires filling the air in an endless haze, and children starving on the curbs.

Instead it looked like a hallmark movie.

The paths were clean of trash. Even though they were only in the middle of November, there were Christmas decorations tastefully lining the shop windows. The only thing lingering in the air was the gray skies overhead. There were no screams of terror, no sad and depressed people slumped over from their endless jobs. It just looked like... a normal, cleaner, and slightly better smelling society.

Tommy even checked the alleyways. They were clean too.

It was super sus.

Still, it wasn't a good time for Tommy to try and poke around and to find flaws in the system. Although it was extremely tempting to do so. Instead Tommy sat on one of the benches, holding a cup of tea in the chilly November air. His clothes were simple, allowing him to blend in. A long sleeve t-shirt covered by a red sweater with jeans. He took a sip of his tea and he blinked and Saw-

-a dark red cape curling around his black boots, thudding against the pavement.

-emerald glinting in the sunlight-

-a hand sneaking out and snatching the jewel-

-a flash of a blade-

-Tommy choking on blood.

He opened his eyes, letting the vision fade with a grimace. He let out a shaking breath before taking another sip of his tea. Next to him was a notepad, and he scrawled out, '*don't take the emerald.*' Then Tommy blinked and Saw-

-a dark red cape curling around his black boots, thudding against the pavement.

-a ring on his left hand-

-the gold was palmed into Tommy's hand-

-three steps before a weapon was hefted high into the air and-

-blood splattered onto the ground with a wet smack.

Tommy wrote down 'no rings.' Before he threw himself back into the next possibility. He Saw-

-a dark red cape curling around his black boots, thudding against the pavement.

-Tommy tripping in front of the man, his hands smacking heavily onto the stones.

-"orry, I'll get out of your way." Tommy gave an embarrassed smile-

-a heavy hand clamping down on his shoulder-

-"You're not from here"-

-a shout of pain-

-a dark cell closing in around Tommy.

Tommy opened his eyes, and wrote down the next clue. Getting put in prison was one step above getting killed, but it wasn't good enough. He still had to find a better path to take. And then he Saw-

-a dark red cape curling around his black boots, thudding against the pavement.

-a flash of something bright in the gutter-

-those dark boots paused, and the man leaned down to inspect-

-a body colliding with the man, reaching over and snatching the item from the street-

-Tommy bolted down a clean alley, his heart racing as the simple golden chain was clenched tightly in his hand-

-he dodged left-

-thick blood slowly slipped down the wall of the alley.

Tommy opened his eyes once more. The sun was falling down in the sky, leaving Tommy in the cold chill of a building's shadow. He took a sip of the tea, grimacing at the taste of the now cold drink. His vision was blurry now, and Tommy could barely make out the shapes of the plaza. But there had been a possibility in the last vision. A chance.

Tommy closed his eyes and Saw-

-a dark red cape curling around his black boots, thudding against the pavement.

-a flash of something bright in the gutter-

-those dark boots paused, and the man leaned down to inspect-

-a body colliding with the man, reaching over and snatching the item from the street-

-Tommy bolted down a clean alley, his heart racing as the simple golden chain was clenched tightly in his hand-

-he dodged right-

-and the man followed Tommy into the shadows.

Bingo.

Techno could feel the burning in his blood that called to him to stalk the streets. The Empire was his territory, but he didn't feel the need to patrol all of the land. That was mostly kept to the castle, where it was his den. But as soon as he stepped out with Phil urging him to leave, Techno could not stop himself from walking down the streets. Women and men saw him coming and hid, they knew that seeing him pass by was asking for trouble. General Technoblade had a different reputation than the Blood God, after all.

His eyes scanned the square as he paused at one of the roads. His eyes burning as he noted each and every fault. A building was not up to code. A child was sitting on a bench by himself, with no guardian in sight. A shops 'open' sign was flickering erratically. A piece of trash sat on the ground next to a garbage can.

That would have to change.

He walked with a purpose, a dark red cape curling around his black boots, thudding against the pavement. His eyes scanning his surroundings, his hand on the hilt of his sword. Techno paid no mind to the cowering people in the shops around him. But something made him pause, it made the piglin inside of him perk up. It was a flash of something bright in the gutter.

He knew what it was without even having to see it properly. Gold.

His boots paused from his unending walk as his eyes narrowed on the small golden chain on the ground. Techno leaned down, his hand reaching out to pick up the abandoned piece of wealth.

Then he felt somebody hit him. His body braced and his leg shot to the side in an attempt to stabilize his balance. His hand snaked back to the hilt of his sword like a flash. *DEAD*. The voices rang out in tandem. Whoever dared to touch Techno was dead.

When Techno rose up to attack, he saw the figure of the child racing off in the alleyway. And in his hand held the gold chain, the light catching on it as the kid fled.

That was Techno's gold.

With a growl, Techno lashed out. His feet carried him forwards, the sword freed from his belt, and he struck. Like a whip cracking, it was sharp and fast and unavoidable.

The kid dodged it.

Techno didn't have it in him to be surprised. Instead, he held himself to the motto, 'if you failed once, try again.' Everybody got lucky once. Techno swooped after the child, his cape rising up like mock wings. He was faster, stronger, and the voices in his head chanted for *blood blood blood for the blood god*.

Techno was within striking distance, and he lunged again. The sword coming down on the back of the hooded boy-

And the kid twisted out of the way. His red sneakers stumbled across the pavement, and Techno swung his weapon to the side without breaking stride. Techno saw a flash of wide blue eyes before the kid fell to the ground.

The battle was over. The war had been won. And Techno stabbed downwards.

But there was a sudden tight pressure around Technoblade's throat and he choked. The kid grabbed his cape and *yanked*, causing Techno to stumble backwards. It gave the thief enough time to scramble to his feet and run again.

This time a rumbling roar followed as Techno raced after the hooded figure. He would *tear. Rip him to shreds. Attack! Bathe in his blood.* This was no longer about a pitiful amount of gold, but for Techno's pride. He was the Blood God. And nobody got away from him.

A blind rage took over.

He turned the corner and saw the kid slip through an open window. Techno did not hesitate before following. Slipping through the hole and into a clearly abandoned building. His red eyes were solely focused on the kid, not noticing how the room was clear of clutter. He took three steps before something caught on his boot.

Techno let out an angry roar as he stumbled, his footing unstable. His target darted towards him, foolish human, he will only meet his end. Techno swung, his sword zipping and cutting through the air with a '*zing.*' But the kid only weaved through the attack. And the next one, and the one after that.

Techno was completely blind now. His piglin instincts and the voices chanting the same word over and over. *BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD.*

And then something flashed across Techno's face. His eyes tracked the movement without his input as the gold chain was waved carelessly in front of his face. Distracting him as a bottle was smashed directly into his nose.

Technoblade crumbled to the ground in a heap.

Tommy drummed his fingers nervously on the steering wheel. He stared at the cars in front of him, then glanced in the rearview mirror and caught his own reflection. His blue eyes were scared. And honestly, Tommy was terrified.

It was one thing to play with jail time. It was something completely different when he toyed with his death.

The absolute hulking monster that Tommy had shoved in the backseat of the stolen car was a force that would plague him in his nightmares. He had seen how fast that weapon had turned on him. Tommy had seen his own death dozens of times as he tried to plan out how to incapacitate General Technoblade.

But it was something else to live it.

The stop light was red. That meant Tommy couldn't go, right? He knew vaguely how to drive. And his fists tightened on the steering wheel as he darted his eyes around at the other vehicles around him. Could the other drivers sense that he didn't know what he was doing? His foot pressed down harder on the break.

And his eyes trailed back into the rearview mirror to peer at the slumbering figure underneath the blanket that Tommy threw over him. The only thing that wasn't covered was a limp arm with the cuff that Purpled gave him on it. It was one of the first things Tommy did. Then he glanced away quickly. No use dwelling on the monster that was in the backseat. It would only unnerve him even more.

The light was still red.

And Tommy figured he had a few seconds. He had to check and See-

-the safehouse door was closed. General Technoblade was tied down securely-

-bottle shattering as another weakness potion was thrown onto the imprisoned man-

-the window opened as Tommy escaped as the sun rose on the third day.

A horn behind Tommy honked. And Tommy opened his eyes, saw that the light was green, and stomped on the gas. The car lurched forwards. And Tommy panicked as he tried to race up with the car in front of him.

His leg jittered. And Tommy tried to keep his cool as he shifted around in the driver's seat. His eyes scanned around for any sign that he was being followed. And once Tommy could safely tell himself that he was safe, and that people weren't staring at him, and that he was on the right road, he allowed himself to think about the vision.

Tommy was going to be okay. That was the same outcome he had obsessively checked over and over again. It was his own paranoia talking. When his heists were not over in one go, and

it took several days for him to achieve his goal, Tommy would not stop compulsively checking the future for any changes.

It had saved his ass several times when the future shifted and Tommy's plans had to be remade.

He had done everything right this time. The potion of weakness right up in Technoblade's face. It wouldn't work fast enough otherwise. If Tommy had thrown it at his feet it would still have ended in his death. Giving the general enough time to slaughter Tommy before passing out. Tommy had removed everything that the guy had. All of the jewels and earrings and bracelets and knives and-

General Technoblade was a paranoid bastard. Tommy had patted him down head to toe and still pulled out dozens of daggers and even a small gun from one of his boots. Tommy stuffed everything including the cape in a corner of the room before dragging the man to the car he had hotwired that morning.

It was exhausting, and Tommy's stomach was still tingling from the adrenaline rush.

Tommy glanced in the mirror again. Then averted his eyes back onto the road. General Technoblade's red eyes plagued his thoughts. The absolute fury and promise of pain lingering behind Tommy's eyelids each time he blinked.

There was a predator in the backseat.

It made the avian in him on edge.

"I should've been paid more for this job." Tommy cursed himself. "Next time I'll up the price to a fucking billion dollars. A nether star for this? I should have asked for *five* of them."

Traffic slowed down again, and Tommy jerkily stomped on the break to slow down. The last thing he needed was to get into an accident. That would be the worst case scenario. What would Tommy even say to the police? *'Haha, don't mind the man in the backseat, he's just an easily identifiable government official. What do you mean, he's missing? He's right there, mister police officer.'* That would be stupid.

A phone rang.

Tommy flinched hard, causing the car to jerk and swerve. It took a few heart stopping seconds to steady the car back onto the road, and he swore he could feel judgmental looks from the cars around him.

That was *not his phone*.

The trill of the ringer cut through the air of the car, and suddenly Tommy broke out into a cold sweat. Tommy swore that he had checked the guy's pockets. But looking back at it, he didn't recall leaving a phone behind with all of the other things.

That phone was a tracker.

Tommy poked at the car's buttons until he found the blinker and switched it on. Slowing down and maneuvering through the traffic like a cautious toddler. He was certain that some nutbag in the car behind him was yelling at him to *'move asshole, you have enough space'* but Tommy was a student driver! He was allowed to go as slow as he wanted to.

Finally, Tommy pulled away from the traffic and onto a side street. He stopped the car with a jerk, put on the break, and physically threw himself into the backseat. The slumbering man was unmoving as Tommy pawed at him. And finally, Tommy found the phone. It was hidden in the guy's shirt!

Phil is calling...

In a panic, Tommy declined it. Then he rolled down the window and tossed it onto the curb.

The phone shattered into pieces.

Phil blinked slowly as the dial-tone hit his ear. His head tilted slightly, staring at nothing. The simple gesture was underlined with a thoughtful clicking noise as Philza tried to make sense of what just happened. There was a type of underlying strength that came with being a predatory avian. To put it simply, it was unsettling to a human, and the slow rattle that emanated from his chest would give a normal man a heart attack.

"Phil?" Wilbur poked his head up from a mound of blankets. His son was on the brink of hibernation, but the noise drew him from his slumber. "What's wrong?"

"It's nothing, mate." Phil gave his child a reassuring smile. But his eyes remained calculating and cold. "Go to sleep. We can talk about it when you're not half dead."

Wilbur sniffed the air gently before settling back into the den. Phil watched him without blinking until Wilbur's face relaxed and he was pulled back into his slumber. Then he turned away, walking until he was out of earshot and beckoned the head of guards with a crooked finger.

"What are the chances that Technoblade does not answer his phone?" Philza asked Eret without breaking stride.

"Chances are high," Eret replied. "He might not have noticed his phone going off at all."

"Then what are the chances that he would decline the call?"

Eret's matching pace slowed slightly as they thought. "None. He would have either let it ring until it was done or he would have answered."

Philza snapped his fingers, "find him. Something is wrong."

"Yes, your majesty."

It shouldn't have been an issue. And yet... something was wrong. Phil wouldn't have picked up on it at all if he hadn't heard the dial tone. But now it was the only thing he could think of.

Technoblade, his son, was the most capable person Phil knew. They had spent years together, and Phil could confidently say that he knew his son like the back of his hand. So the slightest deviation of Techno's behavior nagged at him.

It wasn't until Eret called in with a report that Phil's fears became true. Rather than letting his head guard tell him over the phone what they found, Philza took to the skies. Flying to the location Eret told him about.

It was near the outskirts of the Empire's shopping district. An abandoned building that held no remarkable features. There were a dozen men in Phil's uniform swarming around, but Eret held still as Philza landed with a light tap on the floor.

"This way, your majesty." Eret held out a hand towards the door, and Phil was already walking inside. There was nearly nothing to note about the inside of the building either. Wood floors buckling up, peeling paint on the walls, and the stench of decay.

But in the corner, there was a cape. Phil dropped to his knees, ignoring them protesting at the action, as he examined it closer. With a flip of his fingers, Phil grabbed the cape and exposed the contents lying underneath it. Techno's first dagger. The sword is still attached to a belt. All of the gold and jewels that Phil had seen Techno wearing that same morning were carelessly thrown onto the ground.

An emerald earring lying on the cold wooden floor. He picked it up as his fingers blackened and turned into talons.

"My son has been taken." Philza, Emperor of the Antarctica Empire, stood up slowly. His cold eyes turned towards Eret, and the supervillain that took over a quarter of the world gazed down at a single human. Shadows began to writhe with his fury.

"Find him."

(Back at the castle, a window latch clicked open.)

Chapter End Notes

Tommy: Driving will be easy, no biggy
also Tommy: *clutches the steering wheel and drives like a granny* USE YOUR
BLINKERS, ASSHOLE

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy sat behind the steering wheel, frozen and staring at nothing. He blinked and Saw-

The apartment he had set up was surrounded. Men in blue-

-the door slammed open as-

-dark wings towering higher than the sky and inky black talons dripping-

-a screech of death.

Okay. Change of plans. Tommy slammed the car into drive, pressing his foot to the gas. The vehicle jerked a few times as it lurched forwards. The safehouse was not going to work anymore. He had to hide out somewhere else. Where? He didn't know. But he'll find out.

He stopped at a stop sign with a frantic press to the break. Tommy hadn't noticed the sign fast enough, causing the car to skid as he stopped it suddenly. His mind was whirling. This wasn't *as bad* as the whole Egg fiasco. Tommy had been caught and nearly stabbed through the heart then. But this certainly felt like he was in a bad situation.

He blinked and Saw-

A flashing light of a blinker and-

-following a gray car-

-the car shifting gears sped up-

-tall dark thick trees looming above.

Tommy found the gray car in the middle of traffic. His heart thumped and the car was silent as he followed it. Turning on his blinker and weaving through traffic. Wherever this car was going was going to be at least safe.

Maybe.

Tommy Looked several times. It was dangerous on the road. He mentally wasn't present for a few seconds while driving at a high speed. But he couldn't stop each time his paranoia demanded him to check that he wasn't about to get killed. He would never get anywhere at that rate.

General Technoblade didn't make a sound. And Tommy glanced back at the man several times. His long braided pink hair was splayed out on the backseat.

Time ticked on. Tommy followed the car until the gas light turned on. He blinked and Saw-
-the hotwired car sitting on the side of the road.

-snow gently falling down-

-footprints leading into the forest-

-the only sound was his labored breathing, and the soft breaths of the man flung over Tommy's shoulder.

-he was safe, huddling next to a fireplace. An ugly quilt covering his shivering body.

Tommy opened his eyes just as the car gave a rattling shudder. He threw on his blinker and aimed the car to the side of the road. Tall dark trees of a forest surrounded the pavement on all sides. The car jerked to a halt as it hit the rocks by the side of the road. Tommy took a second to just *breathe* before he moved. Was this the best path he could take? Tommy didn't know. He didn't have the time nor the energy to check other visions. This was the only chance he had at the moment, and he was going to take it.

And that's how Tommy found himself in the middle of the wilderness as snow reached his knees. It had been... hours. He thought he could find his way out of the trees to some hotel, but each time Tommy Looked he only saw himself going further and further into the forest. The trees were numerous and looming.

He had to keep going. Even as sound itself began to suffocate under the falling blizzard. Tommy had to put one frozen foot in front of the other. One step at a time.

One step at a time.

(He was too far into the forest to realize that he forgot his bag with all his supplies in the car. Tommy let out a string of curses. He would just have to deal with the loss.)

Snow was quiet. Too quiet.

The only sound was Tommy's harsh breathing and the soft breaths of the man over his shoulder.

There was a shape hidden in the distance. It was so hard to *fucking see* with the snow twirling gently down from the sky. But Tommy was able to catch sight of something that wasn't a tree, and he adjusted his stance before sluggishly moving towards it. The weight on his back didn't move, only letting out a soft puff of air. Was that bad? Tommy's prisoner didn't shiver. He never did, even when Tommy was shaking so hard he thought he'd lose his teeth.

Tommy didn't shiver anymore. That was probably a bad sign.

His knees protested from the change in direction. And Tommy had no spare energy to even hiss in pain, instead he kept his eyes on the distant shadow of something on the horizon. He slid through the snow, barely able to keep his feet off the ground an inch before having to take another step. The snow was up to his knees now, and yeah, that was a bad sign.

The shape became more defined, and to Tommy's delight and soul crushing relief, it was a cabin. He didn't question how or why it was there, it was a refuge from the cold. He pushed forwards, the last few yards feeling like a chasm. But the end was in sight, and Tommy didn't wait a second longer. He had to *get out of the snow*.

The door was locked. With frustratingly numb fingers Tommy pulled out a few wires and picked it. Whereas before, he could be inside within seconds. But his tired and slow movements, it had taken nearly a minute to turn the lock. With a stumble, Tommy crashed inside. The man on his shoulder didn't move as he was knocked about. And Tommy was so grateful.

Next step, Tommy had to get warm. He knew the dangers of being cold, and he couldn't stop no matter how much his body protested. Hell, he protested the thought as well. But the idea of losing a toe or something was bad, and it pushed him to continue. The cabin was frosty, but not nearly as chilly as the open air outside. The smell of dust and wood lingered, and the first thing Tommy saw was the fireplace. A heavy metal box with a pipe that rose up through the roof. *Fuck yeah*. There even was a stack of wood next to it, left for convenience for the owners of the cabin. Well, it sucks to be them, because Tommy was going to burn that shit.

There was a musty couch in front of the fireplace, and Tommy threw his prisoner onto it. The guy was out cold. Maybe a potion of weakness plus the darts was a bit overkill, but Tommy knew the guy worked out. Hell, Tommy could feel the crushing weight of the guy's muscles as he carried him up a mountain.

That aside, Tommy poked around at the fireplace. Finding a lighter and some paper, he began the arduous task of keeping a fire going. He could light anything on fire, but more often than not it was frustrating to see it sputter back into smoke. *I wish I was a blaze hybrid.* Tommy thought to himself, the idea of setting the wood to burn with a snap of his fingers was tempting. Instead, he blew gently on the embers and nurtured the flames until they caught on one of the logs.

The fire burned. Not only consuming the wood, but also Tommy's nerves. It would take some time for the air to grow warm, but being near the open flame brought pins and needles to his fingers and arms. He then recalled that he actually needed to get out of his wet clothing as well, because staying in it was very bad. His fingers felt like sausages as he fumbled with the buttons and clasps as he tore off his pants and soaking shoes. Luckily his boxers were not wet, and he kept them on for modesty.

Tommy then turned to the sleeping man on the couch, "it's not like you'll see me. But it's too fucking weird to be nude around you."

The man did not respond.

The cabin was cold, but the hearth warmed and lit the small space up. After Tommy had started shivering again, which was a good sign because he was pretty sure that he was facing hypothermia, he explored the rest of the house. He had to keep moving, the restless energy of a heist that didn't exactly succeed, nor did it fail, was getting to him. Plus he'd have to camp out here for a few days, and then Tommy could return the general. It was better to just figure out what else the cabin had.

The first thing he did was to find out if they had a blanket. He found a quilt on a tiny bed, and quickly wrapped it around his shoulders. The second thing he did was to find out if they had running water. They were in the middle of one of the coldest countries. He didn't know what kind of magic people had in order to prevent pipes from bursting from the cold up here. And he really hoped that the water hadn't been turned off. He didn't want to live off of snow outside. He shivered at the thought.

He turned one of the faucets in the kitchen. There was a rumble as the pipe shuddered and groaned, and Tommy braced himself. But to his relief, the water did trickle out of the fixture. It was a little dirty, and Tommy let it run until the water turned clear. He turned it off, satisfied that he had at least running water. Then he opened all of the cupboards, peering into each one. Most of them were empty, with a film of dust laying on the shelves. There wasn't a stove or a dishwasher. But there were plenty of pots and pans around. But Tommy found success when he opened a pantry door to find a wall of cans sitting innocently on the shelves.

He picked up a few, peering at the contents. Beans, soup, corn, peas, all of it nonperishable. There were also buckets labeled 'flour' and 'sugar.'

This would last Tommy and his prisoner the entire duration of their stay. The contract was to steal Technoblade for a few days. And Tommy was glad he wasn't going to starve while waiting to bring the heavy man back.

Tommy stepped back from the pantry after inspecting the food and he wandered through the small home. It wasn't very big. There was a bathroom with an ancient tub and a gross looking bar of soap. There was a tiny bedroom, where Tommy had snagged the quilt, and he inspected the empty dresser and closet. Besides the living room with a fireplace and the kitchen next to it, that was it. It took him roughly twenty minutes to inspect the entire cabin.

It was good enough shelter for Tommy. Satisfied, he curled up near the fire and threw another log on. He glanced back at the slumbering man. He wasn't going to die from being too cold, right?

It would be very bad if Tommy did not *return* the man. His reputation would be tainted forever. He was a thief, not a killer. And Tommy did not plan for the snow or the sudden hike through the woods. For Prime's sake, Tommy was wearing sneakers. Otherwise he'd have let the man keep the cape he was wearing. The flimsy white shirt didn't look like it would keep Technoblade warm. Tommy reached out and touched the man, but he did not stir.

"Okay, yeah. You're a bit cold." Tommy noted the icy temperature as he gripped Technoblade's wrist. What was he supposed to do with an unconscious guy that was too

cold? Tommy had seen in movies that you're supposed to get the wet clothes off and-

Tommy made a face. He was *not* taking the clothes off of an unconscious dude. It just felt super creepy. But Tommy had already shucked the rest of his wet clothes off, leaving him in just the quilt and boxers. It would be bad if the guy *died*.

The things he had to do for a job.

Technoblade did not stir as Tommy unbuttoned his shirt and he didn't move as Tommy also struggled to pull his arms through the wet fabric. It was a fight to get the clingy material off the limp limbs. Not to mention Tommy had to *lift* Technoblade up to pull it from underneath him, and the guy was *heavy*. It was only through Tommy's sheer manliness that he could have carried Technoblade as far as he did. His arms and back ached from the effort.

Not that Tommy looked or anything. "I am not looking," Tommy whispered to the man, "I am not going to look. I am not that guy. I am not a creep. I will plead to any crime a judge will give me but I will *not* go to jail for taking a peek."

The man did not say anything. And Tommy grimaced as it was unfortunately time to take the guys pants off. "Please have underwear on. *Please*." He grimaced and averted his eyes away, desperately trying to very much *not* glance at his prisoner. The black pants and boots were thrown onto the floor with the rest of the clothes, and Tommy was *very* relieved to notice that the man *did* have underwear. Tommy threw the quilt onto the man. Then paused, before tucking it in.

"Do not die. Please don't die. I don't want to deal with a body." Tommy whispered, "so you get warm, you hear!"

Tommy shivered as the cool air of the cabin brushed up against his vulnerable skin. He turned away from the warm fire as he went back to the bedroom. It was colder, and he shivered again as he overturned the mattress, looking under the bed frame. He peered into a closet and the empty drawers of a dresser. But there wasn't a spare blanket or sheet he could grab.

"Damn," Tommy bit out as he shivered violently. He hurried back to the warmth of the fireplace, curling up next to it as he breathed out shaky breaths. He touched his clothes but found them still wet and cold, and he shoved them closer to the fire in the hopes they'd dry out faster.

He glanced at the figure still covered in the quilt on the couch. "I sh-sh-should move you closer, puh-probably." Tommy thought he was cold before but now he was *freezing*. His body finally realized that it should do something about it. Tommy reached out and with a heave, he pulled the couch closer over to the fire. And finally, he stared down at the slumbering man.

"Okay, mister." Tommy said, "we have to share. And this is *not* going to be a weird thing. Okay? Because I'm cold, you're cold, and there is just one blanket. We will *never* speak of this again." Technoblade did not acknowledge Tommy's life crisis.

Tommy lifted up the blanket, revealing an arm with the glowing cuff that Tommy attached onto him. "Oh yeah, maybe that's a smart move. *Technoblade don't move*." Tommy watched

as the magic of the enchantment glowed slightly. The man didn't react, but that was exactly what Tommy wanted. He didn't want the guy to wake up in the middle of the night and strangle Tommy for having the audacity to sleep next to him.

That was the first of six commands that Tommy could make. He had to keep track of that.

Tommy slipped underneath the blanket, and his face heated up as he awkwardly tried to find a place to curl up. "This is the worst." Tommy whispered, "just the worst. I'm never going to think about this again. I vow if I ever find a piece of magic that lets me forget embarrassing moments then I'll use it on this." Then Tommy paused, "and also that time when I slipped on a banana in front of 404. But mostly this."

Tommy found a slightly less awkward position underneath Technoblades arm, pressing himself up against the back of the couch and wedging himself in the small space. After he was properly situated he made sure the blanket was covering both of them before closing his eyes.

Tommy would deny it until he died, but the sound of Technoblade constant rumbling breaths lulled him to sleep.

Sunlight woke Tommy up. It was stabbing into his face, attacking him until he could no longer fight against it. Honestly, he could have slept for a lot longer. But it was too bright, and he was a victim of the sunlight's tyranny. He let out a sad little *'burr'* before opening his eyes to the harsh element.

After his eyes adjusted, Tommy glanced around his surroundings. The cabin was cold again. The fire had died sometime during the night, though there were still some red coals sitting in the gray ash. Tommy would have to start it up again. Although the air was cold, Tommy was warm and toasty.

Tommy didn't *have* to get up. At least not right now. The air was too cold, the blanket was soft, and the couch was warm. Tommy curled back up into a ball, tucking himself back under the quilt. This time the sun would not be hitting his eyes. *Ha*. Tommy wins.

There was an annoyed puff of air that displaced some of Tommy's hair. With a jerk, Tommy twisted his head and looked up. He met red eyes.

"*Fuck!*" Tommy threw himself off the couch, the blanket flying off with him. He landed with a thud, bruising his legs. His life flashed before his eyes. The guy was going to kill him! Tommy jumped to his feet, ready to throw himself out a window when he saw that General Technoblade hadn't moved on the couch.

Relief washed over him as Tommy recalled that he had ordered Technoblade not to move last night. If he hadn't then Tommy would have been a dead man! Or worse, he could have been cut open or tortured. That would have fucking sucked.

Tommy mentally kicked himself for forgetting the bag back in the car. If had those weakness potions then he could just avoid the deadly stare Technoblade was giving him. Shit. And it had Tommy's extra supplies too.

The chill of the air was giving Tommy goose bumps. He sucked in a cold breath, and exhaled with a shiver. Tommy noticed that Technoblade was in a similar state as well, the blanket had been thrown to the floor. "It's too cold for this shit." Tommy muttered shakily, grabbing the blanket and throwing onto the man. He did not, for a good reason because those eyes were staring daggers into him, tuck Technoblade in like he did last night.

Instead Tommy reached down to check on his clothes. They were cold and stiff, but they were not wet. Which was probably as good as they were going to get. It was better than standing around in nothing but his boxers. Tommy cursed like a sailor as he slid his shirt over his head. His pants were ridged to the touch, and Tommy wriggled them on awkwardly. He could feel the eyes boring into him, and he was a little self conscious.

Once he was dressed, Tommy cracked his knuckles and moved to get the fire started up again. It wasn't as difficult as last night, there were some live coals still burning hot. Tommy coaxed the fire to live, slowly adding more and more wood until it was crackling merrily. The biting chill in the air slowly melted away as it warmed up.

Tommy was not looking at his prisoner. Not because he was a coward. The great Tommy Innit was no coward. He had other things to do! Like, uh, make some food. Tommy had to go make some food because he was hungry and he wasn't looking at Technoblade because he was scared and he definitely didn't know what to do next.

Tommy wandered into the cold kitchen, and promptly had a freak out session. General Technoblade was a *killer*. The kind that Tommy did not work with for a reason. Yes, the cuff was on him. But that didn't mean that Technoblade couldn't find some way to harm him.

Okay. Okay, Tommy had to make a set of rules. Ones that didn't allow Technoblade to kill him until Tommy returned him back to the Empire. Tommy scrubbed his hand over his face. First rule, *don't kill Tommy*. Second rule, *don't hurt Tommy*.

Those sounded pretty good so far. Right? But the cuff wasn't the perfect fail safe. Tommy could get hurt accidentally. Even emotionally. And Tommy was certain that Technoblade could find some way around the rules because he was a smart strategic guy. Hell, his job was to *fight wars*. Tommy had to cover his ass.

Tommy fiddled with his bracelet, trying to think of what to say. When the chill was getting too much for him, Tommy finally grabbed a few cans of some soup and a pot with a handle on it. He emptied the cans into the pot, and dragged the heavy iron pot over to the fire. Tommy had wondered why there was a chain with a hook above the fire, and now he knew it was to hold a pan over it. The pot swayed gently as Tommy set it above the fire, and suddenly Tommy didn't have anything to do but wait.

There was dead silence. He chewed on the bottom of his lip. Tommy stared at the fire until he could hear the soup starting to simmer. Finally he got up and grabbed a couple of bowls before turning his attention to the still form on the couch.

“So, I have a few rules you’ll have to follow, Mister Blade.” Tommy finally made eye contact. Fuck, the guy was mad. If looks could kill, Tommy would have been dead a long time ago. Thank goodness that Tommy had forced him to stay still. Tommy fumbled with the bowls slightly.

“Technoblade you are not to cause any type of harm to my person. Emotionally, physically, or accidentally. Do not kill me, do not hurt me, do not try to apprehend or subdue me. Do not use your superpower. Do not even plan to kill me. You cannot leave this cabin or try to contact anybody outside of it. Do not try to escape.” That was the best that Tommy could come up with. He racked his brain for anything else he might need, but nothing else came to mind.

Two out of six.

Tommy ladled out soup nervously, putting off the final command. “I think your clothes are dry. You should put them on.” He nervously swallowed before glancing back. Then he put the soup on a table and... yeah. Okay, he couldn’t stall any more. *“Technoblade, you can move.”*

Three out of six.

Tommy thought he knew what was going to happen. But it turned out to be a bit more terrifying than that. Like a tiger finally pouncing on his prey, Technoblade surged from the couch with a powerful move. It was like watching a tsunami fall on top of him. Tommy flinched backwards, hitting the wall as Technoblade surged towards him. It was all he could do. He closed his eyes in fright.

A second passed.

And another one.

Tommy finally opened his eyes to see an angry shaking hand reaching for him. But it did not move any further. It was like a force field was stopping it from moving. The cuff was glowing on the man’s arm. Technoblade’s face was twisted with fury. “I will *end* you,” a deep voice seethed, and *yeah okay Tommy was a little scared*. But like, who wouldn’t be in this situation? Like, Purpled would totally be pissing his pants if he was here. Tommy was a big man, and men did not hide their feelings.

“Okay.” Tommy definitely did not squeak. He spoke bravely. Like a man. Then he cleared his throat, “so the soup is getting cold.” He edged a little bit away from the very angry and very deadly man.

Technoblade withdrew and, without breaking eye contact, flipped the table over. Along with the two bowls of soup.

Okay, fuck that.

The fear that had made Tommy freeze up was gone. Technobitch is a toddler. “Seriously?” Tommy sighed, and rolled his eyes. “Whatever. I don’t care.” He dragged a hand down his

face and looked at Technoblade who was scowling at the door. Then Tommy flushed, “and go put some clothes on!”

Techno was certain that this wasn't how a kidnapping was supposed to be like. Hell, he *had* been kidnapped before. It had taken only a few minutes before his kidnappers were dead and he was strolling back to the palace. Out of the two brothers, Wilbur was the one who was taken the most. And it was because he disguised himself to be soft and weaker, tricking the criminals into thinking that he was the easier target. They never lived to see the error of their ways.

Technoblade is the *Blood God*. One of the worst supervillains in the world. He toppled countless governments, destroyed cities, and killed thousands in a single day. He took over the world for a day. The very idea that Techno was abducted was absurd.

It was almost surreal.

Honestly, he couldn't believe that this was happening to him. *Him*. And apparently his kidnapper was some scrawny little kid who's voice cracked every other sentence.

When Techno woke up early that morning, unable to move and with a heavy warm weight on top of him, he almost purred. The first thing that he saw was *gold*. When he finally cleared the remains of the weakness potion from his head, he saw a mop of blonde hair curled up under his arm, the slow warm puffs of the kid's breath warming his chest.

Then he shoved his instincts back into a little box inside of his head firmly, even though he wanted to crane his hand and pet the shining hair. Techno woke up in an unfamiliar place with a few fuzzy memories of tearing through the city because the kid took a trinket from him.

That's when Techno noticed that he was not wearing his clothes, and promptly decided to kill the kid right then and there. But his body did not respond. It laid on the couch, limp and relaxed. It must've been some kind of enchantment. Something akin to what Wilbur could do with his voice. Instead of fighting it, Techno decided to make a mental list on the best way to kill the brat drooling on him.

Techno decided that trapping the kid inside this cabin and setting it on fire would be delightful.

It took hours before the kid woke up. And he had the *audacity* to try and go back to sleep. Techno blade huffed angrily. And the brat screeched in his ear before throwing himself off of Techno, leaving him defenseless to the cold on the couch. It was satisfying to watch the kid have a mental breakdown. Techno was just *staring* at him. And already he could see how it got under the kids' skin.

Hmmm. Maybe skinning the kid alive would be pretty fun too.

The blanket was thrown back onto Techno. It was amusing to watch the child try to ignore him and act nonchalant. But his body language told a different story. Just the weight of Techno's eyes was enough to make the boy scared. How would he act when he had the punishing touch of Techno's hands on him?

Then the kid came back from hiding in the other room, and he opened his mouth and *ordered* Techno. He could feel the magic catching on his limbs. And he wanted to *snarl*. Nobody told Technoblade what to do. The mild amusement turned into twisting anger, his bloodlust rushing through him.

And then Techno could move. He threw himself at the boy. Ready to rip and tear him into pieces. His vision was red and went to grab those blonde locks and to slam the kid's head into the floor over and over again. But his body froze up and he could barely breathe. "I will *end* you." Technoblade seethed. Eventually, the kid will slip up. One moment, that's all Techno will need. And he will bathe in the blood of this child.

"Okay," the kid said, clearly frightened and edging away from Techno's outstretched hand. "So the soup is getting cold."

Fuck the soup.

Enraged that he could not directly harm the child, he grabbed the table and threw it to the floor. If he could not make the boy bleed then he will *inconvenience* him. Techno vowed to make this child's life as hard as he could. He stared at the doorway, and just the thought of leaving the cabin made his limbs freeze up with that annoying magic.

"Seriously?" The kid sighed. Then Techno heard him splutter out, "and go put some clothes on!"

For a brief moment, Techno was against doing anything the boy said. But he felt the cold brush against his skin, and thought better of it. He bared his teeth to the child, watching with satisfaction as the boy shrank away in fear, before walking over to his warmed clothes by the fire.

Anger surged through him as he realized that his things were *gone*. His cape, his jewels and rings, even his earring, was missing. Techno did not rip the shirt he held in his hands, although he craved to ruin something. Instead he put it on, alongside the rest of his clothes. And he finally sat back down on the couch, watching the child with calculating eyes.

Eventually... the kid will mess up. And Techno will be there to give the finishing blow.

This was not the kind of kidnapping that Techno thought it would be. He thought eventually there would be questions. An interrogation. He was ready for it. For the fight. The exchange of words until one of them broke. He was ready for the blood, and the torture. The child would not learn anything of value from him.

Instead, he found the kid staring out the window for hours.

It was boring.

“When do you think the snow will stop falling?” The kid asked, not glancing away from the scene outside. The fallen snow laid nearly waist height. And there was still a flurry of it coming down.

Techno raised one eyebrow, “this is Antarctica, kid. The snow doesn’t *stop*. ”

“Shut up!” The child looked away and shot Technoblade a dirty look. “I’m *not* a kid. And what do you mean that the snow never stops? It can’t *always* snow here.”

Techno gave a child a flat look, “let me clarify, since you lack the intelligence to understand. This is Antarctica at the beginning of winter. The snow doesn’t stop until spring.”

“I am not stupid!” The kid was getting riled up. He glanced out the window with his blue eyes. Then softly to himself he said, “how am I supposed to get out of here in a few days if it’s like this?” That last part was clearly not meant for Techno to hear. But this was the most entertaining thing all day, so he answered the question.

“Oh, I doubt you’ll be able to leave at all. At least not for a few months until the snow melts, at the very least.”

“Months?” The kid squeaked, “I can’t stay here for months?!”

Techno leaned forwards, amused. “You’re not from around here, are you?” That peaked his interest. Very few people were able to leave the Empire. And even less so came *in*.

“Oh no,” the kid replied, “born and raised here. My whole life,” he lied.

“Really? Where did you grow up?”

The kid glared at Techno, “I’m not telling you!”

“Right, right.” Techno leaned back on the couch. The kid was interesting. He was clearly not from the Empire. Not one of Techno’s citizens. And yet, here he was, on his land. There is a leak at the border.

But it won’t last long. If the child won’t interrogate Techno, then somebody has to.

Chapter End Notes

turns camera until you see the blurry face of the author too close to the screen, a microphone pressed to her lips **AND THEY WERE ROOMMATES.**

Unbeta'd

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Hey, do you remember how I tagged this as a DARK SBI fic? Yeah? Well. We are about to hit that train of dubious nature, and I would like to kindly inform you that if you don't like it, please don't read it. It's your choice, and I don't care for people getting angry at me because you didn't heed the tags.

WARNINGS:

violence!!!

descriptions of blood/gore!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Eret walked in the snow, their boots crunching into the hardened icy layer on top as they approached the scene. Several lower classed guards stood at attention, as the head guard, and the Emperor himself, came closer. Eret could only hear their footsteps, but that didn't mean that Philza wasn't behind them. Phil was so quiet sometimes it was dangerous to let their guard down.

“Traffic cameras caught this car about three hours after the search began.” Eret spoke analytically, “the driver wasn't fully caught on film, but we were able to catch that it was a blonde male, maybe early twenties wearing a red sweater and jeans. We were able to catch a few glimpses of your son in the backseat.” Eret passed over a tablet with the still-frames from the traffic cameras frozen on. There was a blurry picture of a blanket covered form in the backseat, with pink hair spilling out.

Black clawed hands reached out and took the tablet, and Eret continued methodically. “Once the kidnapper started to drive west, we were unable to find any more traffic cameras to track them. There are quite a few backroads leading out into the woods in these parts, but a concerned citizen reported an abandoned, possibly stolen vehicle that matches our description.” Eret gave a respectful nod towards the hastily cleaned from the snow car. There were patches of ice still clinging to it. It's trunk was open, it's contents exposed to the light snow still falling from the sky.

There was a hum from Philza, the sound like rattling bones. Clicking and rubbing together. Eret continued onwards, trudging through the dirtied snow to peer at the evidence left behind. There was a duffle bag and a few empty stray wrappers.

With quick efficiency, they opened the duffle bag to peer inside. Eret picked up one of the bottles, holding it to the light. “Potion of weakness.” He called out, and one of the cadets began to write it down. “Enough for two, maybe three days. Enchanted rope, a lock picking

set, a notebook with some writing on it, and..." Eret paused, one eyebrow quirking up, "some goldfish crackers."

"What does the notebook say," Philza said, and Eret handed it over after he glanced at the messily written words.

"It's a list of some kind." Eret surmised, "it feels... determined." Eret could feel the clinging emotions on the paper, one of the main reasons why they were in charge of the investigation. An empath that could sense lingering emotions on objects.

The words were jumbled. *Don't take the emerald. No rings. Don't talk - prison? Use chain - go RIGHT! Grab cape when on the ground. Watch out for puddles. Does the Empire have health care insurance or is that a capitalist thing? Hit potion in face - use gold chain.*

Then there was a small doodle of a cow-like creature near the bottom of the page. It had a wonky flower on its head. An arrow was drawn to it, with the word *Henry* next to it.

"What do you think of this?" Philza released it back to Eret's hold.

"Using context clues, it seems to be instructions. I can gather from the question that they aren't from the Empire itself." Eret responded.

Phil leaned back on his feet and looked up at the sky thoughtfully. "There is a breach at the border." He said, "could they have been trying to take Techno out of the Empire?"

"I don't see any evidence against that hypothesis. But the kidnapper drove further into the Empire, rather than aiming for the outskirts." Eret responded and their fingers touched the car, "I can sense unease and uncertainty. Maybe their plans were derailed."

"When I tried to call Techno," Philza replied, "the call rang before it was cut off. Techno liked to keep his phone in his shirt pocket. It wasn't left with everything else he had. They must have missed it when they searched him."

"The phone was found in a pedestrian area. Near the capital." Eret responded, "if their plans were not adjusted, perhaps they were planning on staying close to the castle. And once the phone went off, it spooked them. It matches the feelings I can sense."

"Where did they go after abandoning the vehicle?" Emperor Philza asked.

Eret paused, and their fingers brushed up against the car again. Searching for the answer. The owner of the car felt different from the anxious energy of the person who drove it last, so it was easy to determine which energy to study. They focused on the faint impressions left behind. "The kidnapper was nervous, but there was confidence as well. He had a backup plan. Maybe an accomplice met him here with another vehicle?" Eret leaned into the car harder, trying to find another clue. "I can't feel anything else. Once the kidnapper left the car, he took Techno with him. He didn't grab anything else. But I sense that..." they trailed off, "he knew he was getting away with it."

Philza turned away, “have the cadets scour the camera footage again. See if we can find where the accomplice drove to. Check for any breaches in the border as well, I want to know how and when somebody came into my territory.” His black wings unfurled, and shadows rippled around him. Coalescing into unnatural shapes. With a beat of his wings, the shadows scattered and whirled around him. Turning the darkness into beaks and feathers, as hundreds of crows made up of writhing black shades took to the skies.

Eret nodded, already pulling their phone out to command the troops.

“Oh, and Eret?” Phil turned to his head guard. Eret stood at attention, “good job, mate.”

“Thank you, your majesty.” Eret bowed, as the Emperor beat his wings twice and was gone.

The days passed by, and Tommy was getting antsy. And as much as it killed him to admit it, Technoblade was right. The snow did *not stop*. The cabin was such a small space to live in, and Tommy had taken to pacing back and forth in the kitchen. It was cold in there, yes, but it was at least outside of the Technoblade’s vision. He didn’t want the pink haired bastard to see Tommy’s carefully concealed terror.

His plan was falling apart.

Fuck, this *never happened*. Red, the international thief, never failed at his job. He had backup plans with backup plans, Tommy always had a way to escape. But as the snow slowly covered the entire cabin, Tommy’s only way of surviving was to *stay*. All of his visions ended with him dead, frozen in a ditch somewhere. Civilization was so far away there wasn’t a single chance that Tommy could escape.

His three days were *up*.

Tommy should be letting Techno leave and he should scamper off into the woods to escape. In a day or two, Tommy could be back home in his nest, throwing around his diamonds and jewels and sleeping contentedly without a predator nearby. That’s what *should* be happening.

Instead Tommy paced back and forth in the kitchen, too afraid to be in the same room as Technoblade. The pain in the ass. An absolute dick, if Tommy had ever met one. Tommy should have known that Techno would find some way to torment him.

Tommy took the bedroom, stealing the quilt away. He woke up both mornings freezing his butt off and shivering. He couldn’t bear the idea of sleeping in the same room as a predator, although that bit him in his frozen ass. The bird inside of his head wouldn’t let him forget that danger was only a room away.

The first morning, he had caught Technoblade trying to light the cabin on *fire* which was a fucking heart attack. He put the fire out, only to turn around and see Technoblade holding a knife in front of his face. The man had simply shrugged and said, “it’s not my fault if you ran into it.” He said it so casually, like he was talking about the weather.

What the actual fuck? This guy is a nut job. An actual insane lunatic. And when Tommy spewed those very same insults, Technoblade got this weird smile on his face and said, “you should meet my brother then.”

Tommy vowed right then and there that he would never *ever* meet Technoblade’s brother. He even said so to Technoblade too! And the fuckin creep had to tack on, “don’t make promises you can’t keep.”

What the actual fuck!?

Tommy had to leave the room to muffle a scream. He didn’t think he was very successful, due to the pleased look that Technoblade had for hours afterwards.

And that was the *first day*.

The second was worse. Tommy walked out of the room and nearly stepped on broken glass. Technoblade shattered one of those glass bowls that was famous for literally never breaking. “What the hell!?” Tommy squawked as he backpedaled into the cold room. The only reason his feet weren’t cut up was because he was quick on his toes.

Technoblade was sitting at the kitchen table, “oh sorry. I accidentally broke a bowl and forgot to clean it up.”

Tommy sputtered, “I told you not to try and hurt me!”

Technoblade made eye contact, and those red eyes cut into Tommy’s heart. “You told me not to hurt you. You did not tell me not to set traps that could hurt you.” The sharp look in those red eyes practically *dared* Tommy to do something about it.

“Okay then,” Tommy said, “*Technoblade, don’t plan, create, or set traps that could hurt, maim, kill, or otherwise incapacitate me.*”

Technoblade didn’t seem too concerned with the new command. He just went back to whatever the fuck he was doing before Tommy got up. Leaving Tommy to jump over the shards to find his shoes. Only to find that they had been thrown out a window.

“Fuck you!”

The third day began with silence.

Tommy was already having a rough day. This was the day to leave, it was supposed the end of this torture, and yet the snow as piled up high and Tommy couldn’t realistically see himself hiking through the woods through all of it.

Technoblade did not say a single word the entire day, and it gave Tommy paranoia. His nerves were already shot, and the quiet wasn’t helping.

The general is a smart man. And if he was too quiet that meant he had some kind of plan happening. Right? Tommy would glance over quickly, not really willing to make eye contact

with the creep. Just being around him made Tommy's hackles rise. He was a predator, and Tommy's bird instincts never let him forget it.

Although, after a quick glance or two, Tommy could see Technoblade nodding off. There wasn't much else to do in the cabin besides sleep. And Tommy couldn't help but feel a bit jealous that he had given Technoblade the warmest spot in the house to sleep at.

But he was a generous kidnapper. If only his kidnappee was the same.

But once dusk fell, and Technoblade shook off his sleep, he began to tell stories. "You know who you remind me of?" His voice was almost melodic.

Tommy tensed up, glancing back over to the shadowed figure next to the fire. He didn't dare get close to Techno. Instead Tommy leaned up against the window, which was nearly obscured by the snow. The last of the sun's rays were dipping over the horizon, leaving Tommy in darkness. The warm orange light slowly fading away.

Technoblade did not wait for an answer. "You remind me of a man named Alvin. I forgot his last name. But Alvin was a kind man. He grew up on his family's farm. And eventually one day, he was summoned to join the Empire's service."

"He had to join?" Tommy asked before he could stop himself. It was literally the only conversation he had all day, sue him. Tommy didn't like the quiet.

"It's mandatory for all citizens ages nineteen and older." Technoblade stared at him, "didn't you say that you grew up here?"

"Must've slipped my mind." Tommy muttered, looking away.

"Alvin was given the generous offer to work in the fortress. He was a good soldier. He sent his pay home to his family's farm, and he found a pretty young lady to date. His life was on track. But one day, Alvin made a mistake." Technoblade never looked away, not even to blink.

"He looked the other way. Alvin saw a child stealing a loaf of bread from a local bakery. And instead of apprehending the child and upholding the law, Alvin thought it was best to let the child leave with the stolen goods."

Tommy was locked in place. His flight or fight instincts were freezing him in place. The red eyes were holding him there. The bird inside of his brain was telling him to *don't move, predator.*

"When I learned about this, do you want to know the first thing that I did?" Techno tilted his head slightly, "I went to his house and I *chopped off one of his hands*. He needed the other one to hold a sword still. His service to the Empire wasn't over. But it is the price a thief has to pay when they steal. If he had caught the kid, then he wouldn't have had to take their punishment."

“That’s so fucked up.” Tommy breathed quietly. “You punish people like that? This is the twenty-first century, not some medieval shitty land.”

“It’s the law.” Techno tilted his head. “Everybody knows what happens to those who break them here. It’s taught in our schools. How do you not know this?”

Tommy swallowed, “I was homeschooled.” He lied. You know, like a liar.

Techno gave a small thoughtful hum, before starting again. “That reminds me of the time when I slit a mans belly open. Did you know that everything just slides out once you do that? The poor man had no idea what to do with his guts spilling out of him.” He let out a small huff of laughter.

Tommy twitched. Still trapped by that stare.

Predator.

“Or that time I found a woman selling illegal drugs, oh, she didn’t know what to do when I cut her leg off. That was actually an accident.” Techno admitted, “I was aiming for her ankles. But she moved too much. She actually tried to grab at the blood to stop it from spraying out of her. It was like a fire hose.”

“Stop.” Tommy muttered.

“There was that time with a homeless man. He tried to mug a teenager on their way home, but I-”

“Stop.” Tommy said louder. Fighting the bird instincts that told him to be quiet and small. It pressed down and held him still, but he couldn’t listen anymore.

“-couldn’t let this man threaten a child like that. So I took the knife he was using to scare the kid and used it to dig his eyes out.” Techno looked amused. Fucking reminiscing like it was funny. “Of course, you would know that carrying a weapon illegally is punishable by death. But I was being kind, and gave him a lesser sentence. I gave him the penalty that we give to beggars. We *blind* them.”

“*Stop it.*” Tommy shouted, rocking back on his feet. The hold on his instincts breaking, but it made him feel faint with nausea. “I can’t even- you- this place is *fucking* awful! Primes above I can’t even pretend I’m from this shitstain of a country. No wonder people want to leave here so desperately.” The words were spilling out, uncontrollable. “I can’t even imagine how horrible life must be to live here.”

A hand rested above Tommy’s head, and suddenly Technoblade was leaning down into his face. Tommy froze at the sudden lack of space between him and a *predator*. How did he move so fast? Tommy’s breath caught in his throat, and he couldn’t move again. Staring straight at Technoblade’s shirt.

“How curious, is it then?” Another big hand reached down and touched Tommy’s chin. He tilted Tommy’s head up until their eyes met, “that you somehow found your way past our

border? Most people who find their way in *never* find their way out.” Technoblade leaned in closer, pressing Tommy against the wall.

His heart pounding, Tommy’s mouth suddenly went dry. Blue eyes meeting Techno’s red ones, and for a long eternity they held that stare.

And then Tommy let out a breath of laughter.

“Oh fuck you,” Tommy snorted, “you think you can intimidate me like that, bitch?” He reached up and grabbed the wrist of Technoblade and pulled the hand away from his face.

Tommy’s voice lowered, “*‘oh look at me, I’m General Technoblade. I tell scary stories after napping all day like an elderly man. Meh meh meh.’* People can get into this stupid country anytime, it just takes talent not to get noticed, bitch. I’m not saying anything to you, pork chop.” And then Tommy ducked under the arm of the hulking man and escaped back into the cold bedroom.

Leaving Technoblade behind him to ponder his words. “*Pork chop?*”

Tommy had thought that the weird dance and verbal attack thing was going to get worse or weirder. After all, he had just admitted to the General of the Antarctica Empire that he was an illegal crime boy who snuck into their very impressively built borders. It was what the Antarctica Empire was famous for. Nobody got in. Nobody got out. And yet Tommy had told the guy who was in charge of the army that there was a way through it.

Tommy wasn’t certain if a regular human could actually get out by jumping off the cliff. But Technoblade wasn’t going to know that.

As soon as the snow settled to an acceptable level, Tommy was out of here. He didn’t care if he was going to have to walk through snow up to his waist. He was getting out of this hell hole. The stories last night freaked the fuck out of him. He knew that Technoblade told them to unnerve him, but damn it had worked. Maybe too well.

As Tommy cautiously opened the bedroom door to the warmth of the living room, he peered around to see where the fucker was. And to his surprise, Tommy didn’t see him. He leaned out a bit further, but unless Technoblade was in the kitchen then he wasn’t in here.

A stab of fear hit Tommy. What if Technoblade *left*? Tommy stumbled out of the room, already feeling adrenaline before he caught sight of the figure slumbering on the couch. Technoblade was asleep still.

His pink hair was slightly messed up, and his shirt was askew. He didn’t look like the man who was telling terrifying stories last night. Instead he looked about twenty percent less dangerous.

But there was still about eighty percent that threatened Tommy.

Tommy decided to be ‘*that one roommate*’ and didn’t muffle the sounds he made. He stomped over to the kitchen. Banging pots and, uh, cans around. He didn’t hide his presence because Tommy was a big man and he wasn’t going to hide away forever! He lived in this cabin too, and that meant he could make as much noise as he wanted. An irrational part of Tommy wanted to stick his tongue out at the piglin hybrid. Maybe even flip him off while he was at it.

Tommy choked down a cold can of corn. It was one of the few things he could stomach eating cold, and as much as he would like to have hot soup, that meant being near Technoblade. And he had a sudden flash of imagination of Techno just reaching out with one big hand and shoving Tommy into the fire. Yeah, that sounded something like Technoblade would do. The bitch.

After eating, Tommy opened the backdoor in the kitchen. It led to a small porch that had a small overhang. There was about five and a half feet of snow on the ground. But there was a sizable stack of firewood behind the cabin. Some of it had snow on it, which Tommy didn’t touch yet. But there was some that didn’t get wet, and he grabbed an arm full to bring it inside.

Tommy decided that if he ever found out who owned this cabin, he’d send them a gift basket or some shit. If he had to go punch a tree down with his bare hands in this weather he’d mutiny. Tommy stomped his way back into the warmth of the living room and dumped the wood loudly next to the fireplace. He turned back and went to grab some more.

Each time, Tommy glanced at Technoblade and found the guy dead asleep.

Was he just pretending? Or was he actually asleep? Tommy legitimately could not tell the difference.

It was his third, and final load of firewood, that the thought occurred. ‘*Don’t piglins hibernate during the winter?*’ Tommy had forgotten about it entirely. He had read once on an online forum that when piglins that lived in the overworld, which was rare, that they would sleep through winter when it got too cold. He had read somebody’s comment that piglin hybrids would also sleep too, but not for an entire season.

Huh.

If Tommy had found more information about it, he might have waited until Technoblade was hibernating to kidnap him. Taking care of a grown ass man who gave him the creeps was one of the worst experiences he has ever had. Tommy had to be an *adult*. If he had taken the piglin hybrid when Techno was asleep then maybe it might have been easier, and Tommy wouldn’t have been stuck in this shitty cabin in the middle of fuck nowhere.

Shit, if he only had waited a few more days, then none of this might not have happened.

Tommy kept the fire going, but mostly huddled on the other side of the room. He kept an eye on his prisoner for anything hinky. But, Technoblade never stirred. Not once. Tommy had thought maybe this was some other type of ploy or weird tactic the guy was using, but pretending to be asleep all day seemed a bit much.

Tommy didn't mind it at the beginning.

But as the days began to pass and Technoblade didn't stir, Tommy began to lose his *mind*.

It was completely silent. Tommy tried to keep himself busy. He cleaned the empty and dusty cabinets, finding a few treasures. An old deck of cards that was missing the king of hearts, and an old pair of dice that had fallen behind one of the cracks. Which was great! But Tommy didn't know how to play anything but go fish and poker. He only could vaguely recall how solitaire was set up, and Tommy made up his own rules after a while.

At one point, Tommy went outside in the blistering cold for a while, and he discovered an axe in the snow behind the house. Tommy wasn't about to let Technoblade know about his new weapon, so he put it underneath the bed. It was nice to know that he had a weapon. Especially nearby if Techno decided not to play nice anymore.

That is, if Technoblade ever woke up again. He kept snoring away on the couch.

Tommy was not jealous. Not at all. He hummed under his breath and talked to himself to keep the quiet at bay. He wasn't bitter that one of them could just mentally check out for a few days while the other had nothing to do.

Day six was nearly the same. Tommy decided to stack the wet firewood underneath the small porch. Maybe eventually it'll dry out and become useful as tinder. He tried to get as much snow off of it as he could. The stack of wood next to the fireplace kept growing, as Tommy couldn't stand still. Continuously grabbing more and more kindling, unable to stop because that meant Tommy didn't know what to do next.

At one point Tommy tried to walk into the snowy wall outside just to *leave*. But he immediately regretted it. His clothes were wet and he was freezing into pieces. It left him having to sit in front of the fire with his clothes off again.

Tommy curled under the familiar quilt, fiddling with his enchanted bracelet. He glanced at the slumbering man. "I wish I could sleep until winter is done too." He said, the sound of his voice breaking the unending quiet that was driving him absolutely *mad*.

Tommy is a songbird avian. He didn't *do* silence.

But the sound of his own voice spurred him onwards. "You know, you're much better company when you're not being crazy and intimidating."

Technoblade didn't stir at the sound.

Well. Tommy had a captive audience after all. Might as well abuse it.

"Alright then. Normally I would tell people a few funny stories about my pog and amazing jobs that I do. But I don't want you to learn anything incriminating about me. I left my suit at home for a reason, I didn't want people to know that I, an infamous, erm, villain walked into the Empire. So I am going to tell you about the second best thing I can talk about- the

Manhunt series.” Tommy nodded to himself. “The newest movie was released a while ago and man, it was so good. Don’t tell anyone but I have a discord channel dedicated to it.”

“So Manhunt 1 starts with Queen Ender Dragon. She just got this prophecy that this guy, Clay Taken, is meant to kill her. Clay’s the actor, by the way, and he’s playing a character called Fantasy, which is a *super dumb name*. And the Queen decides to brainwash Fantasy’s best friends into hunting him down to kill him. Fantasy has to make his way to the End to kill the Queen before his friends end his life.” And Tommy rambled on, and the tight feeling in his chest eased with the sound of his own voice.

He went through the plotline of the first movie, and even the second. Tommy added in his own fan theories that he discussed with his fellow online fanatics. At one point, he fell asleep, his back up against the couch and his head tilted at a weird angle. But it had been the best sleep he had since entering the cabin.

Tommy opened up after that. As much as he could to a slumbering man. Day seven, eight, and nine were so *slow*. But it was slightly better now that Tommy filled the air with his own thoughts. He watched as the snow fell and he cursed it out until his throat felt raw. He played card games with the cards he found. If he made up his own version of Solitaire, then that was Tommy’s own business, okay? He included the dice he found just to add an extra bit of flare.

Things were quiet. And Tommy was going insane. The cabin was getting smaller by the minute. And talking out loud seemed to be the only thing from the whole place closing in on Tommy. He talked and talked until his voice was raspy, because the only other option was to be surrounded by silence and just the thought of it was unbearable.

And then one day, Technoblade had to freak him out again. Because that’s what the fucker did. It was like he enjoyed being a scary son of a bitch.

Tommy would have written off another day of Technoblade sleeping, if he hadn’t turned around at one point to see the red eyes staring at him. Tommy jumped and cursed loudly. But just as quickly as it had happened, Technoblade’s eyes closed and didn’t open again.

The man was going to give Tommy a heart attack one of these days.

Day ten had only just begun, the sun had lowered and the stars were out. At least, Tommy thought it was the tenth day. Tommy didn’t have a watch so he assumed it was past midnight. He couldn’t sleep. Only toss and turn on the cold hard mattress. Even with the quilt and all of his dried clothes on, he couldn’t fall unconscious. Tommy gave up as his teeth began to click together as he shivered. He stood up and moved to the other room.

The fire was low. The only sound was the crackle of the flame and the pop as it ate away wood. Tommy threw on another piece before curling up on the blanket. Already the warmth was sinking into his bones, and a few minutes later he was out cold.

A hand reached out and gently pet Tommy’s golden hair sleepily before falling away.

Techno had been trying to fight against his instincts. It was the one battle that he did not have the upper hand. The one fight that he could not outlast his enemy either. Being taken from his home had allowed him to wrestle back some control against his piglin half. But after only a few days it returned with a vengeance. Techno should be at home by now, asleep in his own bed with his father's gold surrounding him. Instead he was in the middle of the wastelands, snowed in a tiny cabin, with a little child who snuck his way into Techno's territory.

If Techno was lucky, the brat had a phone with him. And if he was even more lucky, it would have signal so he could contact his father to get him out. He wouldn't have to spend months waiting the winter out in this hovel. But if the kid did have the device, it would probably be hidden in the room that Techno hadn't explored yet.

But by the third night of his capture, Techno found himself sinking into his hindbrain. The lure of sleep was getting too much, and the icy breath of cold that slunk into the cabin didn't help either. It pushed his instincts to hibernate. He struggled against it, but it was a war that the Blood God was never meant to win.

He stirred a few times. Techno could barely recall hearing wood being dropped onto the floor. Or the sound of cards being shuffled. A tired voice rambling out words, cracking every other sentence. Techno's instincts eventually calmed around the kid, seeing him less as a threat. Allowing Techno to sink further into the abyss that claimed him.

Hibernation was not just about sleeping. Although Techno wished Wilbur could sleep away months at a time. Prime, if only he could have a long break from his brother. Hibernation was also a time where a piglin could preen over their hoard too. Techno would sleep for hours at a time only to wake up and trail his fingers over the golden rings and necklaces. His thumb would rub against the glistening broaches until they would shine. His crown would gleam by the time he was done, spending hours getting every fleck of filth out of the small crevices. Techno could spend all day staring at his collection. Gazing at the jewels and rubies and diamonds, wearing every piece before gently taking it off and replacing it with a new one.

But Techno had been pushing it. Even before his abrupt departure from his family's home. The extra wait before his hibernation only pushed him further into a coma. He knew he had spent far longer asleep than he should have when he woke up with sharp hunger pains. The fire was crackling, and seeing the flash of red yellows and *gold* was powerful.

A sudden urge to reach in and grasp at the flames, the golden ones, was almost breathtakingly strong. He sat up, almost ready to fall his way into the fireplace before he caught himself. Techno had to take a moment to breathe through his nose, fighting against the sudden surge of irrational actions. He... *needed* food. He was starving.

He rose up onto shaking knees when he saw the figure on the floor. The kid was curled up with the blanket under him. The light caught on his curls and it was *gold*. He needed to thread his fingers through those locks and to pick at the knots forming until it was free and-

No.

He needed food.

Techno stumbled away, but his fingers and hands itched. The kitchen was significantly colder, and it helped slightly to clear Techno's brain. Just the thought of the kid's hair was making him feel desperate. With determined focus, Techno grabbed the closest can of whatever garbage food, peeled off the top, and downed it cold. He had to eat. A normal man would have choked at the cold chunky soup. But Techno only mildly gagged before forcing himself to swallow. It took him a few minutes before he finished the can. The sensation of the thick broccoli soup and the foul taste of it shocked him enough to figure out the next step of his plan. He was alone in his thoughts for a change, the voices a low murmur in the background.

If the kid was next to the fire then his room was empty. It was the perfect time to find out if the kid had a phone.

It took the will power of an actual god to stop Techno from looking at the brat as he exited the kitchen. The lure of *gold* was too strong, and he was a temptation. Techno had a mission. And he had to keep his focus.

The kids room was freezing. Even colder than the kitchen. There was a small bare mattress, a dresser, and an empty closet that didn't have a door in the frame. Techno looked through the drawers, but didn't find anything. The closet was barren, and when he ducked his head under the bed-

Oh how *lovely*. An axe. Techno picked up the weapon, feeling the familiar weight of it in his hand. This could be useful.

Besides the obvious places, there was nothing. Techno paced around the room, testing each floorboard for any hollow sounds. But there wasn't a hidden stash to be found. To put it simply, the searching room had been a waste.

Techno tilted his head, considering the axe.

Well. Almost a waste.

It was time to get answers.

Techno swung the axe, letting it free fall until the head of it sank into the ground two inches left to the head of the sleeping kid. He wanted to let it cut and tear, to feel blood against his skin, but at the thought his body froze up and Techno physically could not do it even if he yearned to. So the next best thing was to let it sink into the wood floor with a thud.

The boy jolted at the noise, his blue eyes flying open. But Techno didn't let him have the time to understand what was happening. Keeping his enemy off balance. He was on top of the kid, one hand restraining the boy by the neck and the other holding the neck of the axe, letting the dim firelight flash on the sharp blade.

“You are going to tell me why I am here.” Techno demanded, letting his hand squeeze the kid's neck tighter. It was a threat. But it wasn't harming the kid. The damn enchantment wouldn't let him. But it was enough as a reminder- Techno is *dangerous*.

“You-” the kid croaked out, “can't hurt me.”

“Is that so?” And Techno let go of the axe and lifted his wrist into the air. It was the wrong hand, the cuff is on his other wrist. But he was betting on the fact that the kid was disoriented from being woken up suddenly and taken off guard. The kid's eyes dilated with fear, and Techno felt a surge of satisfaction by the reaction. “Tell me.” It was criminally easy to manipulate the child.

He expected the kid to crumple like wet cardboard. To spill all of his secrets out while begging for his life. Then Techno would find a way to kill the kid. Somehow. Perhaps locking the kid out of the cabin might do. Or gagging him and letting him starve to death was another possibility. Technoblade isn't picky. As long as the child died, he would be satisfied.

Instead the boy sucked in a breath. “Fuck you bitch. I am no snitch.” He croaked out, his hands reaching up and clawing at the hand wrapped around his throat. Techno could not hurt the boy. But he lifted him up before letting go. The kid couldn't stop his head from hitting the floor with a *thunk*. And Techno's hand once again rested on the child's throat.

“Fuck you pink pig bitch. I hope you choke on your spit and die, you absolute dickhead pissboy. Go eat some poison and throw yourself off a cliff. End yourself, you fucking miserable two faced ugly asshole.” The kid was throwing insults like they were going out of fashion. Techno was, quite frankly, amazed by the vitriol. Wilbur would have been impressed. The kid's hands clawed at his arm holding him down, and then suddenly the insults stopped.

One of the kids' hands was on the iron cuff. Realization dawned on the kid's face. He knew that Techno tricked him. The boy sucked in a breath, but Techno's hand switched from his neck to his jaw. Gripping it tightly. “You never said I couldn't stop you from speaking.” Technoblade taunted. And he saw the fury in the kids' blue eyes light up.

It was unexpectedly entertaining to rile him up. Maybe Techno might let the boy live and to drag him to the palace just to see how Wilbur reacted with the feral child. Of course, letting the boy live and letting the boy keep all of his limbs were two different things.

They were at a stalemate. Techno knew it, so did the kid. He wanted answers, but the boy had to speak in order to tell him. The second the kid could talk, he'd use the enchantment against Techno.

And then Techno saw the bracelet.

It was a simple thing, black and made out of a cord. But he could feel the weak heat of an enchantment on it. He had searched everywhere in this cabin for something that the kid was hiding. But there was one place he had missed. The child himself. “What's this?” Techno allowed his free hand to grab at it.

The kid thrashed in his embrace once he felt Techno's fingers curl around the bracelet. His legs came up and sank into Techno's gut, but it didn't hurt. Techno only had to press his full weight down on the kid to get him to stop. Techno could feel the nails digging into his hand, but he ignored the pain as he ripped the bracelet off.

And then he saw *gold*.

Chapter End Notes

Techno: wait, why do I know the plotline to Manhunt series?

Tommy: osmosis, bitch.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Unbeta'd

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was a reason why Tommy did not like to show his wings.

First off, it was a great identifier. If everybody knew that the greatest thief in the world was an avian, then Tommy could kiss his anonymity goodbye. He had to buy special shampoo off a website, which could be traced back to him. (Although he did have it shipped through several different countries before landing at his doorstep.) There are certain signs you can take to watch for, waiting for Tommy to trip up and expose himself. As much as Tommy had friends in the hero business, he had a thousand more enemies ready to gut him.

But in reality, Tommy did it because they were ludicrous.

There were two types of avians. The predatory type, which were basically the baddest of bitches, and then there was the songbird type. There were dozens of articles published about the two types. One was the hunter and scavenger, while the other was the home-maker and child rearer.

You could guess which one Tommy was.

It was, sadly, not the cool one with talons.

The predatory types had huge wing spans with immense strength. Usually their feathers were a solid, muted, color. They could fly in the air for hours with no impact to their stamina. Wherein songbird types were more agile, smaller, and dexterous but didn't have the same strength as their counterparts. But their feathers looked like precious metals, gems, and starlight.

It was annoyingly horribly *shiny*.

It was like he was forced to wear the ugliest sweater for the rest of existence. Tommy is a simple big man, who wore casual clothes and enjoyed the softer things in life. Having his wings exposed felt like everybody was watching him, judging him. They were kind of... embarrassing.

Tommy knew of another songbird avian who lived in the recovering Badlands. He thinks their name is Skeppy. And his wings looked like blue glittering diamonds. Tommy had been in awe over the fact that Skeppy could casually walk around in life as if he didn't have a

target on his back. And then Tommy met Skeppy's boyfriend, Bad, and understood why people left the songbird alone.

The guy was a legitimate demon.

(Just the sight of the familiar face sent Tommy running to another country, to another *continent*. He couldn't- he couldn't stand being anywhere near Bad again. Memories of a time threatened to swallow Tommy up. Nightmares chased him away.)

Tommy could faintly recall his mother as well. She had white, almost silver, hair and her wings were crystals. They caught on the light and refracted spots onto the walls of his blue childhood bedroom. But she was gone now, dead probably, and Tommy had been cursed with wings that could do the same.

And this mass murdering general who pinned Tommy down and threw an axe next to his head knew about it too.

Tommy didn't wait to see what the guy's reaction was. He let out an ear-splitting screech, making his raw voice hurt from the sudden cry, and threw himself wildly around, hoping to dislodge the man. He felt a thick arm wrap around his torso and held him tightly, and Tommy cursed his sweater for suddenly being trapping his wings. If he could just twist a little bit more than he could get the guy with a knee or something! His arms were pinned, his wings were trapped, and all Tommy could do was wriggle around.

Tommy let out another cry that was too high to be human, and he kicked uselessly at the air and twisted and tried to bite the hand and-

And-

And what was that vibration?

Just barely audible above Tommy's panicked breaths was a low rumble. Exhaustion was already threatening Tommy's escape, and he paused to figure out what the hell was making that sound. He hiccuped, and the sound became clear as his breath hitched. It was coming from Technoblade.

A deep rumble that vibrated out of his chest and into Tommy. It was getting louder the longer Tommy was trying to escape. Tommy let out a keen wail and tried to pull himself out, but the growl only increased in volume.

Technoblade was getting angry. Wasn't he? He's growling and Tommy was suddenly split between clawing his way out and playing dead.

Tommy sniffled as suddenly it hit him like a train that he was well and truly stuck. And he slumped down with exhaustion. Breathing too fast, Tommy didn't think he was ready for the sneering threats and the calculating looks.

His secret is exposed.

He felt vulnerable. And he knew without a doubt that Technoblade will pounce on this opportunity. He'll poke and prod at the festering wound. Using it as another weapon against Tommy. Use it against him like he used the axe, cutting and making every second feel like hell.

Tommy would give anything to be able to leave this icy hell hole and go. He would willingly walk through the dozens of miles of forest and chest high snow just to not be here. His numerous bank accounts that had far too many digits could be emptied as long as he could be in his nest.

Tommy would never admit it, but he might be crying. Or the ceiling was leaking on his face or something. He didn't like being exposed. He didn't like people to see his wings. He wanted to go home now.

The tight arm around Tommy haltingly loosened. Waiting for a hint that Tommy will struggle again. But Tommy was exhausted. There was no escape. Not right now. Tommy could- he could run. Later. Once Technoblade let him go Tommy could fly away and never look back. So he didn't move as Technoblade slowly released him from his captive embrace. The bird in his head agreed, *lay still, don't move. Play dead.*

All the while the growling never stopped. It was like white noise in the background. It traveled into Tommy and shook him to his core. Tommy was gently set down onto the quilt, and finally he could see Technoblade's face.

Oh.

Oh.

Techno's blood red eyes were nearly black. The pupil was expanded so far that Tommy could see only a sliver of red on the outside. His hair, which was always neat even though there wasn't a brush anywhere in the cabin, was hanging limply into his face.

Slowly the hand that had been nearly bruising Tommy's jaw moved away. And yet Tommy didn't say a word. All he had to do was say, 'Technoblade, do not touch me.' And that would be the end of it. This whole nightmare scenario would be over.

But something made Tommy pause. Like a gear that finally clicked into place, turning and whirling around until it finally revealed the hidden revelation.

The hand that had covered Tommy's mouth slowly moved past Tommy's head and very, oh so gently, touched one of Tommy's wings. His sweater was not meant to be stretched out so far, leaving the top and bottom of his wings exposed while encasing the middle. An effective band trapping his wings to his back. As soon as Tommy could feel the brush of fingers he felt the rumble increase from Technoblade.

Piglins... were drawn to gold, right?

Techno wasn't growling at Tommy... he was... *purring?*

Tommy had always thought that his wings looked more brass than anything. A bit dirty and muddy, but it still held the hint of shine to each of his feathers. When he was younger they were brighter, but when he grew older and couldn't take care of them they began to dull to a darker color. Tommy didn't have to turn his head far to look at his wings, the feathers curling around and into his periphery.

In the warm glow of the firelight, Tommy could see how they looked golden. The yellow of the flickering flames obscured the dullness of his feathers. Causing them to shine with reflected light.

Tommy looked wearily back up at the piglin hybrid who had been caught by the allure of Tommy's wings. Technoblade had mentally packed up his bags and left. Leaving his instincts in control. The dangerous beast was gone, for a moment, leaving Tommy with a piglin enchanted by his wings. Tommy gave out a long, shaking sigh and weakly he said, "you're not going to be weird about this, are you?"

Technoblade was weird about it.

Clearly the man was gone. Lost in his instincts. Tommy hoped that Technoblade wouldn't kill him for seeing him act like this. Growing up in a hybrid society came with a lot of weird quirks that people did. And the polite thing to do was to either just go along with it, and not to stress out the person who wasn't mentally there.

When Tommy was younger, maybe two or three, he recalled a woman who once picked him up and tried to put him in a tree. She was a koala hybrid and the sight of him playing on the ground was just too much for her. Tommy didn't really know what was happening, all he knew was that he got to go up high in the branches, but once the woman snapped out of it she apologised to Tommy's mother profusely before embarrassingly scampering off.

The polite thing to do was to just accept that people literally cannot stop themselves when their instincts take hold.

But this was an interesting situation where Tommy was trapped with a man who would not hesitate to kill him if there wasn't a cuff on his arm that stopped him. Technoblade used his words as weapons, trying to unnerve Tommy as much as he could for his heinous plans. Technoblade is a predator.

And now that same man was trying to take care of Tommy like a nestling, and it gave Tommy whiplash.

The soft touches to Tommy's hair made his head spin when his neck and head still ached from Techno's attack. The fingers that gently eased the tangles from his hair had been wrapped around his throat. The axe that had flashed above Tommy's head was tossed aside, as Techno prowled the cabin.

Tommy held the quilt around his shoulders, watching with wary eyes as Technoblade strode across the room, checking the door handles and the windows, before coming back and doing it all over again. Tommy sat still, huddled under a blanket with his sweater painfully stretched

over his wings, waiting for the next shoe to drop. What will happen now? Technoblade will murder him? Or, worse, try to hug him?

Tommy couldn't tell which one was the lesser evil.

Prime above this was making Tommy's aching skull hurt even more as he tried to comprehend what was happening.

Any time Tommy moved or shifted, Technoblade's eyes would zero in on him and he would stop and stare. Why did he keep doing that? Was he looking at Tommy like he was prey, ready to strike? Was he waiting for Tommy to make a move off of the couch? And then he'll try and, Tommy didn't know, eat him?

Once, Tommy had tentatively put one foot onto the ground and Technoblade growled so loud that it made the door nearly rattle.

Okay then. Tommy was not going to move off the couch. It was considered to be a safe zone. And Tommy liked not pissing off the prowling predator.

Technoblade would periodically walk into one of the other small rooms in the cabin. But then he would pop out with his eyes staring at Tommy as if he was daring the avian to move. Tommy didn't fall for the trick. He stayed perfectly still on the couch. Occasionally he flipped Techno off. But the piglin hybrid didn't notice the rude gesture.

He was sweating like a bitch because he was next to the fire. Plus the quilt, and his sweater, it made Tommy, forgive the pun, like a pig in a blanket. But Tommy didn't like having his wings exposed. Techno looked at them all weird and he tried to touch them and Tommy didn't like that. The more layers he had on, the more protection Tommy had. So the sweater stayed on, even if it was pressing his wings up awkwardly.

But it was uncomfortable to feel sweat sliding down his shoulder blades, hot and slick. His wings were getting damp from it and he could feel them starting to stick together and it was nasty.

There was a thump from the other room. The bedroom. Tommy gazed at the doorway, wondering what Technoblade could be doing in there. The answer was soon given as Techno walked back into the room with the heavy mattress under his arm.

The guy didn't even look like he was struggling, the bastard. Tommy knew the mattress was a bitch to move.

"What are you doing with that?" Tommy asked, and Technoblade's ear twitched. There was no answer.

The mattress was thrown onto the ground with a thud, sending loose debris flying. It was tucked into a corner with no windows next to it. Then Techno gave Tommy a very long look, which Tommy matched with a glare. There is a second where Technoblade very obviously was trying to see Tommy's wings, but Tommy's blanket was like Fort Knox, hiding the feathers from Techno's gaze.

“Don’t you even *think* about it.”

Two long steps, Techno was in front of Tommy. Looming and looking as imposing as ever. A hand came down on top of Tommy’s head, and there was a gentle tug as Tommy’s hair was rubbed between Technoblades fingers.

Tommy jerked his head back, giving out a warning hiss. “Don’t touch me.”

There was a rumble and that was the only warning Tommy had as he was suddenly grabbed and picked up. “Hey!” Tommy cried out, “what are you doing?!”

The journey didn’t take more than a few seconds. Just as quick as Tommy had been picked up, he was dropped onto a soft surface. He bounced, and the quilt became dislodged. “Seriously?” Tommy complained as he straightened up from being thrown onto the mattress. “You couldn’t have just let me walk the three feet?”

Technoblade chuffed at Tommy like he was laughing.

“That’s it. I’m writing you out of my will.” Tommy shot back, “not that I was going to leave you anything. But I will specifically put in that the General Technoblade of the Antarctica Empire gets *nothing* from me.”

Then a hand came down and tugged on Tommy’s sweater. “Hey!” Tommy shoved the hand off, but it returned with more force. The quilt had fallen, revealing Tommy still wearing the restricting sweater. It was incredibly unbearable. But it was a layer of security that would keep Technoblades hands off of Tommy’s wings.

Clearly Technoblade wanted it gone now.

Tommy batted the hand away, curling his body away from the piglin hybrid. “I have boundaries, man. And taking my clothes off is not allowed. You wrongun!”

Technoblade let out a low grumble and a huff. His hand reached out again but this time he grabbed Tommy by the arm and dragged him towards the edge of the mattress. Tommy tried to jerk away but the grip was like steel.

“Get *off* of me.” Tommy’s voice cracked and shit, that was the worst moment his puberty could have taken to remind him of it.

A hand grabbed at the tight fabric around Tommy’s wings and pulled it over his head. Tommy let out a yell of protest, but it was muffled as the sweater was torn off of him. The air was warm, but it was like a breath of fresh air to get out of the suffocating layer. But it also stripped him of his defenses.

Tommy threw himself across the mattress and away from the curious fingers that were poised above his wings. He could feel his feathers puffing up into the air with anger. And he let out another warning hiss, baring his teeth. “Do not touch me.”

Technoblade still held the stretched out sweater in one hand, the other frozen in place from where it had been reaching for him. His eyes were locked onto Tommy’s wings. Staring.

Unmoving.

Tommy scrambled for the quilt and threw it over his back. Then he returned to huddle in the corner as far away as he could from Technoblade.

Slowly, the piglin hybrid lowered his poised hand and gave out a low chuff.

Then he stood up and checked the windows.

Tommy thought that had been the end of it. Technoblade's piglin side respected his boundaries. He could sense that Tommy was hostile, and left him alone. Ha! Techno knew he couldn't pick a fight with Tommy, because he was a big man! The greatest and Tommy would fuck him up if he ever tried anything hinky again. At least, Tommy had hoped that would be the end of it.

As the sun had risen and lowered, Technoblade hovered. He didn't make another move towards Tommy. He had dutifully placed logs on the fire when it was getting cold again. And he brought out food and water for Tommy. Even though Technoblade stared at him as Tommy ate. It was... *weird*. The bird inside of Tommy's head was flipping between hissing at Techno and freezing up every time Tommy made eye-contact with him.

Tommy was getting tired. He had spent the day huddled under the blanket and he was finally crashing. The adrenaline had left him long ago. The warmth of the room combined with the softness of the mattress was doing him in. And he shifted his position around so that he could lay down comfortably, but still keeping Techno in eyesight. Technoblade, the ever creep, watched him like a hawk.

If Techno did anything, Tommy would do... something. Run? Probably. Fight and screech like a banshee, absolutely! Just right now... Tommy was a bit tired. His eyelids felt like steel, and it was hard to keep them open.

The fire crackled. It was warm. And it was peaceful enough to let Tommy close his eyes.

He didn't hear the footsteps getting closer until he felt a weight settle next to him on the mattress. Tommy opened his eyes wide as Technoblade threw an arm around him and pulled him in a tight hug. He let out a sound of surprise and squirmed to escape, but Tommy was essentially wrapped up in the quilt like a worm.

There was a puff of air across Tommy's hair. A small chuff, warning Tommy to calm down. And then there was a hand on Tommy's head. "Hey-" Tommy jolted but Technoblade grumbled again, warningly.

Freeze. The bird said, and Tommy's limbs locked.

There wasn't much else to do but lay there. His arms and legs were tied up in the quilt. But at least his wings were covered. It was his only saving grace. And Techno played with the strands of his hair. Dragging his fingers through the tangled hair, gently tugging until they were free. Rubbing his fingers and twisting the strands.

There was a low rumble. Not like the other sounds that Technoblade had made during the day. It felt deeper and rhythmic.

“Are you *purring*?” Tommy asked incredulously. There was no response. But the purr got louder.

Tommy would never admit it. Not even to Prime itself. But it was... *nice*. Technoblade didn't hurt him. Just played with his hair and sometimes scratched his scalp. That felt really good.

He didn't want to relax. Because Tommy was certain that Technoblade would pull another one-eighty and threaten him with a knife or something. The whiplash between Techno's violence and this weird purring would kill Tommy. He couldn't let his guard down.

But Tommy fell asleep anyway.

Wilbur woke up from his hibernation with a crick in his neck. It was, perhaps, the first sign that something was wrong.

His room was a mess. It always was when he was stuck inside of his instincts. These drawers had been ripped open, his closet door hanging crooked, gold and trinkets were piled around Wilbur like a nest. He ignored the clutter, instead he picked up a few clean clothes and went to shower.

When he emerged an hour later, his hair styled and his clothes were pressed and neat. And as soon as he stepped out of his den he could feel something was very, *very wrong*. Because... Techno woke up before Wilbur. And his brother always stood guard next to Wilbur's den.

Instead there was a man in a uniform. One of the nameless guards that they employed. And not his brother, giving him hell for sleeping in.

“Your highness, Emperor Philza wishes to speak with you immediately.” The man said, and Wilbur was already down the hallway and heading towards his father. Something was curling in his gut that there was something wrong wrong wrong.

Where was Techno? Did something happen and he was sent on a mission? Did the Empire get attacked and they were at war again? Wilbur could sense the disarray the castle was in. Guards were in their places, their uniforms were perfect, but there was an underlying sense of something that was off. A tension in the air.

When he walked into his father's throne room, he could see the damage. The tapestries that Techno had put up, making the castle feel even more medieval rather than a modern grand stone building, were crumbled to the ground. The lights flickered, some of them were shattered on the ground. Paintings were torn to pieces, their frames were little more than kindling at this point. And his father's dark feathers were strewn across the floor with the dirt.

“Dad?” Wilbur called out with a sinking feeling in his stomach. The golden and jeweled throne, a silly gift that Wilbur and Techno had given Phil after they had conquered the

Empire, was the only thing untouched from the destruction.

A hulking mass of dark feathers rustled at the sound of Wilbur's voice. There was a horrible *click click click* coming from his father, and Wilbur didn't hesitate before rushing into the room. His boots stepped on glass and feathers alike, but he didn't pay any attention before he was kneeling at his father's throne. His knees dropping into the filth that Wilbur would normally protest against touching, but the only thing he cared about was Phil.

"Dad?" Wilbur reached his hands up into the feathers and gently pulled the wings aside to reveal his father's slumped form. More beast than man, feathers curled around his father's face and arms. Dark inky black talons were limp, motionless. "Hey there." The wings rustled slowly and lifted up and pulled Wilbur into their embrace.

"Wilbur?" His father crooned hauntingly, "you're awake?" Slowly Wilbur could feel Phil waking up, his talons reaching up and curling into his hair. Wilbur didn't mind, even though he had just spent a better part of an hour styling it.

"Phil, what's wrong?" Wilbur cut to the chase. The feathers rustled like bones at the question. "Where is Techno?"

The gentle ministrations turned painful for a brief moment, before Phil loosened his grip on Wilbur's hair. "He's gone." Phil replied in a pained whisper.

"*What?*"

"A day after you began your hibernation. I told him to go outside. I shouldn't have. And now he's gone."

"Technoblade is dead?" Wilbur whispered, eyes wide with panic. He couldn't believe it.

Phil let out a soothing croon, "no, I didn't mean it like that. He's been taken. It was luck on my part that I noticed it so soon. But by the time we found the trail it had gone cold. If he was dead then Kristin would have let us know."

Wilbur grew very quiet. "That's impossible." He replied, "Techno literally cannot be gone. Technoblade, my brother, the Blood God, is missing? How- *why?*?"

It was impossible. Technoblade had been... *abducted?* The Blood God. One of the most powerful supervillains in the world. And he had been taken like a child off the street? What did they lure him into the white van with? A nice shiny sword?

Yeah okay, maybe that was possible.

"We don't know. My best theory is that it was the wrong place at the wrong time for Techno. He was already on the edge of hibernation. I bet he's sleeping now, that's why he hasn't slaughtered them to pieces yet." Phil said, almost trying to convince himself of his theory. His talons began to curl through Wilbur's hair again, tightening possessively to keep his son in place.

Wilbur laughed, “whoever decided to fuck with Techno is going to have a very bad day when he wakes up. I can only hope that Techno will leave a piece of them for us.” He leaned into the punishing touch, “Technoblade never dies, don’t worry Dad.”

A hint of a smile appeared on his father’s face at the familiar phrase. And he let out a low croon as he gathered his son in his arms, “it’s been so hard to keep you in your den, mate. I wanted- I needed-” His voice trembled and he let out another round of those terrifying clicks.

Wilbur just let out a rumble, “I’m here now, Dad.” He reached up and took Phil’s chin and gently knocked their foreheads together. Phil’s wings rustled at the sign of affection. “Let’s go to your nest, okay?”

Phil didn’t need another prompting, he gathered his son in his arms and took off with a beat of his wings. Shadows trailing after the two as they slipped further into the castle.

Chapter End Notes

Techno: *tries to make nest*

Tommy: you ain't getting me to no secondary location!!

Listen sometimes you write something and then when youre editing it you realise you just copied a scene from a studio ghibli movie and you just have to deal with it. *points to Wilbur embracing feral bird man*

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Dark things are ahead. This is your warning.

Also I finished my Nanowrimo goal on the 16th. And that's when I knew this story was going to be a monster when I haven't even hit the end of arc one in 50k.

Help.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

About once a week, Tommy dreamed of a maze. The bushes were green, and yet they were so dark in color they looked almost black. No flowers bloomed on their spindly branches. They were kept neat and orderly, almost disappearing with the dark sky that never turned gray with light.

Tommy sat on the edge of a fountain, the dark ebony marble twisting pattern was familiar. He spent eons here, and his fingers traced the white marking in the black stone. The cool stony path was pleasant to the touch against Tommy's bare feet. The only sound was the trickle of water from the fountain behind him, and Tommy leaned up and stared at the ashen sky expanding overhead.

Waiting for her.

It felt like an eternity.

It was over in a second.

Tommy was warm. He was actually barely on the knife's edge of 'too warm' but it hadn't grown too uncomfortable yet to warrant him moving. He was floating in that half-sleep state. But he was content to stay there until he had to when Tommy felt the blanket being gently tugged down.

Tommy gave a disgruntled snort and the tugging stopped. Once the minor disruption was gone, Tommy drifted again.

The blanket was being tugged on again. This time it was slower, and Tommy had missed the first few inches sliding down. The only reason he noticed was because the air was significantly cooler, and it made his arms prickle.

Tommy opened his eyes lazily, '*the fuck?*' He thought, just as he felt something touch his wings.

With a screech that pierced the lazy morning air, Tommy launched himself away. He was across the room, his feet barely touching the cold wooden floor in a second. When he was physically as far away as he could in the small cabin, Tommy whirled around and saw Technoblade slowly clambering to his feet.

“You!” Tommy pointed an accusing finger at him. “Are a sneaky dirty wrongun! You wanted to touch *my* wings, fucker?” The adrenaline was pumping through his veins, and there was no way that Tommy would take this lying down. “Nuh uh! That is never going to happen!” He bounced on his heels.

Tommy was *done* being polite. Technoblade was lost in whatever instincts the guy had, but Tommy was not going to be some sort of doll! He was an independent big man who didn’t need some bitch to coddle him. And trying to sneakily try and touch Tommy’s wings was just a step too far.

Techno was making those snuffling grunting sounds, gesturing to Tommy to get back onto the mattress. Hell no, Tommy wasn’t going anywhere near that mattress again! He crossed his arms and stuck out his tongue. “No!”

The large man gave a rumble and stepped forwards, and Tommy might have been intimidated if his ‘fuck you bitch’ switch hadn’t been flipped. “I’m fast as fuck, boi.” Tommy gave a feint to the left, watching as Technoblade flinched in that direction. “Fast as fuck.” And then Tommy went right, dodging the hand that tried to catch him, and threw himself over the couch.

Technoblade seemed very irritated. Tommy laughed. “Whatcha going to do about it, huh? Can’t touch me asshole.”

The couch was in between the two of them, and Tommy made a few more jerky feints watching as Technoblade reacted to each one. The piglin would twitch and then realize that Tommy was messing with him and went back to those grumbling noises. They kept orbiting the couch, Tommy expertly evading Techno’s grasp (even though they just walked circles around it). The grunting grew louder, and Tommy laughed in the face of danger.

Ha! Tommy’s middle name is danger!

Then Techno grabbed the couch and with a jerk, it crashed into one of the walls. Tommy let out a shriek as his barrier was easily tossed aside and he blinked and Saw-

A hand reaching out-

-ducking under and throwing himself over the-

Tommy ducked left under the hand that grabbed at him. Twisting his momentum he slipped past the piglin hybrid. He didn’t stop as he leapt up onto the table and slid over it. There was a crash and a pained grunt as Technoblade ran into the wooden table. The wood slid across the floor with a creek, and Techno stumbled to the ground.

“Can’t touch this!” Tommy crowed, as Technoblade clambered to his feet. The man gave out a hoarse chuff, and his eyes seemed to be darting between Tommy and the window that he was standing next to.

“Oh?” Tommy drew closer to the window. The pained growling grew louder. “You don’t like me near the window? That’s *too* bad.” And Tommy tapped on the glass. Technoblade let out a roar, and Tommy blinked again, his eyes brightening for a second, before throwing himself under the table just as Technoblade lunged over the top of it.

And that began the game of cat and mouse. Tommy was trapped in a small space, but he fully abused his powers to evade Technoblade at every corner. The piglin hybrid was increasingly frantic. Tearing any obstacle between the two of them away just to grab at Tommy before he slipped away again. And of course, Tommy had made it his mission to touch every single window.

After the third window Technoblade *howled*. It nearly made Tommy lose the game, shaking that bird part of his brain long enough for a hand to clamp onto his arm. Tommy slipped out of it, of course. He was that good. An expert. Amazing big man. But the sound shook him out of his glee.

Technoblade was not doing too hot. His hair was loose and frazzled, his eyes were darting around wildly, and his breath was uneven and heavy. If he were a full piglin, Tommy was certain he would have been foaming at the mouth. Techno’s hands shook as he made grabby hands at Tommy, and Techno kept giving these high pitched whines. Pleading for Tommy to stop.

Guilt shot through Tommy. This was why people didn’t mess with hybrids who were lost to their instincts. It was cruel. Tommy wasn’t playing with General Technoblade, bloodthirsty murderer extraordinaire. This was a piglin hybrid who didn’t know why Tommy was playing keep away.

Tommy let himself be caught. Guilt gnawing at his insides. Strong, but shaking, hands grabbed at him and pulled him into a crushing hug. Frantic fingers probed and tested to see if Tommy had hurt himself. But the touch stayed far away from his wings. Tommy allowed himself to be carried a few feet back to the bed as Technoblade made concerned hums and rumbles.

“Sorry,” Tommy whispered, knowing that Technoblade couldn’t understand him. “I didn’t mean to make you freak out.”

Technoblade just clutched him close, his chest rumbling.

Saying no to Technoblade was like kicking a puppy. The guy was obviously trying to take care of Tommy, and the first time Tommy refused to eat some canned soup (he will never, ever, ever again eat cream of broccoli ever again) the guy got all concerned like Tommy was gravely ill. He patted Tommy down for any kind of injury before throwing the blanket over Tommy and adding more wood to the fire.

The cabin was insufferably hot at this point. Once again Tommy had to remind himself of the piglins natural habitat. The nether, a death trap to any normal folk, was always on fire. So it made sense that Techno's instincts told him that the cabin was too cold even though Tommy was sweating like a pig.

Ha. Like a piglin.

Jokes aside, Tommy was the only human here who had the sense to say 'no' and that meant he was the adult in this situation.

"No! Don't stick your hand in the fire."

"No, don't pick up broken glass."

"Don't touch my wings!"

That last one was said about a thousand times now. Tommy really didn't like having his wings touched. Especially knowing that Technoblade wasn't in control right now. The terrifying man who could probably chop Tommy's wings off and hang them up like a trophy. That Techno was the one who Tommy didn't want to get near. But instinct-driven Techno would try and touch Tommy's wings when Tommy wasn't paying attention, and then there would be a huge hissy fight between the two which somehow Tommy would lose.

Well. Like Tommy had said, telling Technoblade no was like kicking a dog.

Fingers curled into Tommy's hair. That was another thing. Technoblade loved to play with Tommy's hair. It was nice but in a weird way. And sometimes Techno would stare at it like it offended him, tugging on the strands until Tommy would bat him away. Once Techno tried to braid it, but it was far too short for that kind of shit. It made the piglin hybrid irritated which then meant Tommy was annoyed, and then Tommy would have another hissing session.

Tommy didn't mind it too much. He still didn't like being touched like he was a pet. But it was the lesser of two evils. Techno was preoccupied by Tommy's hair that he didn't try to grab his wings. And that was what mattered the most.

Tommy did not like having his wings touched.

Techno was rumbling again. He did that a lot. He grunted noises and made soft wheezing sounds too. But he purred like a cat when he was threading his fingers through Tommy's hair. The noise was... nice. The cabin had been too quiet when it was just Tommy. And the constant shifts and grunts from Techno filled the air and calmed that part of Tommy that didn't like the silence.

Techno's arm curled around Tommy, pulling him into a hug while his other hand played with his hair. "You're a cuddly bastard, aren't you?" Tommy complained, but didn't push against the hold.

This was the new normal now.

Instincts didn't trap a person in their heads unless something very fucking terrible happened. Tommy didn't like, kill Techno's parents in front of him as a child. At least he hoped he didn't. Tommy was fairly certain he hadn't killed anybody.

So why was Technoblade still being weird? Tommy hadn't done anything to him. No torture, or a horrible act of violence.

...okay so Tommy *did* kidnap him. But it was supposed to be only for a few days! And he was going to drug Technoblade for the entire duration except the weakness potions were long since left behind in an abandoned vehicle.

Still. That was so bad to warrant three days of this? Did Tommy traumatise Techno so badly that he's stuck in his animal brain?

A hand crept closer to Tommy's wings. Without turning Tommy batted it away with a weary hiss. "Stop it."

Primes, it was like taking care of a toddler.

The arm around his waist tightened, and the hand came back again. Tommy smacked it away, "don't you fucking dare." He made eye contact and pointed at Techno threateningly.

Techno chuffed, and then the hand slowly rested on Tommy's lower back. Like he knew he was pushing it, and Tommy allowed it. But only barely.

"You are on thin fucking ice." Tommy poked Technoblade, "don't you dare move your hand near my wings or so help me."

For once, Technoblade seemed to understand Tommy. Which was good. Maybe the real Techno might come out soon. The human side that could speak words and didn't hover over Tommy every second of the day.

Although the thought of having to face a mad man who thought throwing an axe next to Tommy's head was an acceptable way to wake him up gave Tommy chills.

Techno rubbed small circles onto Tommy's back. Being all weird and touchy-feely. Tommy was... begrudgingly accepting the clingy behavior. Tommy had tolerated a lot of things happening in the last few days. Techno tried to spoon feed him once. Tommy, excuse the pun, did not let it fly. But that made Techno more stressed out so Tommy allowed it, even though it made his heart hurt and his throat suddenly dry up.

"Do you think we could get out of here soon?" Tommy mumbled, his eyes trailing to the windows. Snow covered them completely. "I'm tired of waiting."

He wanted to go home. To his nest of blankets. The gems that he had strung up to catch the light. Just imagining it without him there made it feel like he had abandoned his nest. The blankets would need washing when he got home. And he would have to dust. Ugh. And shine all of his jewels, they had gone too long without his ministrations.

It's been too long. The days were starting to blur together, and Tommy had lost track now how long it's been.

How much longer will Tommy be here? How much time will he be away from his nest? Primes, he hadn't even told- he had even told his friends that he would be gone for so long. Purpled knew, shit Purpled knew that Tommy was in the most dangerous country in the world. He probably thought Tommy was dead. And Tubbo- Tubbo kind of hated Tommy right now but Tommy could see his best friend wondering why Tommy hadn't sent him their weekly meme. And then Purpled might tell him that Tommy is *dead*. The last time Tommy and Tubbo had actually talked they had *argued*.

The- the last thing Tubbo said to Tommy was that he never wanted to see Tommy again.
Fuck.

He could feel a low distressed warble forming in his chest. But Tommy swallowed it with a thick choking sensation. He shivered slightly, and Techno's grip became tighter.

Tommy hadn't realized that the hand that had been rubbing circles was slowly climbing up his back. Too busy wallowing in his own thoughts, Tommy hadn't noticed the trailing fingers slowly reaching up until-

-until they touched his shoulder blades, where his wings were connected to his back.

Tommy stiffened by the unfamiliar touch. But Techno just held him tighter and crooned, leaning over slightly so that Tommy was stretched onto his lap. "What the hell-" Tommy squawked, and he was going to say more- except those fingers started to knead *right there* and- *oh*.

Tommy's protest was silenced as he suddenly choked on a noise that tried to escape from his mouth. It wasn't a chirp, those were only meant for flock, but it was something soft and far too child-like for Tommy to stomach.

Techno's hand brushed up against the twin scars that ran down the length of Tommy's back. They were thick and ropy, and Tommy couldn't feel them that well. The nerves were dead. But they were prominent enough that his captor could feel them through his torn up shirt. The pressing fingers stalled in their massage for a second as they quested up and down the scars. The comforting rumble turned more hostile and dangerous, and the bird inside of Tommy's head poked out and screeched *danger*.

Tommy's body grew taught as he readied himself to spring out of the arms of a predator before the growl became a purr again. The whiplash of comfort to danger to whatever the fuck was happening was making Tommy's head spin. "Don't-" Tommy made a half aborted motion to slap the hand away again, but those fingers found the place where Tommy's skin met his wings and rubbed and *wow*-

Against Tommy's will, he slumped over like a doll.

The Runt was not making a noise.

Techno could feel the jackhammering of the Runt's heart as he carefully pulled him closer to his chest. Runt was nervous. It had been several day cycles since Techno had laid eyes on the *gold gold gold* and it had been painful to take care of the flighty babe. The Runt did not trust him. And it burned to know that Techno's *gold gold gold* did not think of him as a good protector.

Runt was a babe. A little one. He did not know any better, and Techno was the one who could provide and shelter them from the wind and snow.

Techno had thought it would be a piece of cake. Their den did not have many of the things that he preferred to have when taking care of babes. He did not have the gold nor precious gems that he wished he had to shower the Runt. Nor the materials to build a grand den to house the two of them. He wished he could show the Runt that Techno would be a good provider. That Techno could be the *best* protector.

The den was small. And it had many openings in the walls. Too many for comfort. There should not be windows. Danger could come through them. And he had to check them constantly for the den to be safe. But it did have a few good things. There was food. There was a soft nest for the Runt. And there was a fire. It gave off warmth, but the babe would huddle himself under the only blanket and suddenly the fire wasn't hot enough. If the Runt was cold then Techno had to keep it warm.

But then the Runt didn't listen. Techno could see the Runt's *gold gold gold* wings were in disarray. Den Father had wings too. Black and inky, and they did not glitter and shine like Runt's did. But Den Father's feathers were silky and clean wherein the Runt's was bunched up and dirtied. Techno had been trying to clean them for many day cycles. But the Runt would smack his hand away and screech, gabbering and throwing things at him.

The one time Techno had tried to pin the Runt down and to clean him forcefully was when the Runt had run away! Not far, and not out of the den. But Techno saw the danger as the Runt went to the windows and it was too cold to be away from the fireplace. He tried to bring the Runt back to their nest, but he had evaded Techno.

Techno had never felt so much like a failure to his sounder before. How could he be the best protector if the Runt could run from him like he was an old pig? He was too slow. The Runt was too fast. He was near tears trying to coax the babe back to bed. His voice was hoarse after snorting and pleading the Runt back to his protective arms.

The babe finally listened and allowed Techno to hold him. And that was the last time Techno tried to touch the Runt's wings forcefully. But it did not stop him from trying to help the Runt with his wings entirely. Sometimes the glint of the *gold gold gold* was too strong, and Techno reached up to worship it. But without fail the babe would hiss and smack his hand away.

Techno had to prove to the Runt that he was the best protector. Otherwise the babe would never allow him to help him with his dishevelled wings. He prowled the den, giving the Runt food and comfort, and finally oh so finally the babe was letting him touch his feathers.

His heart felt like it was leaping from his chest as the Runt slumped down onto him, giving Techno full range of his wings. Techno is the best protector. And the babe was *trusting* him.

He crooned softly. Shifting the babe slightly so he could use both of his hands, he reached up and touched the first layer of skewed feathers. The babe flinched at the contact. Techno winced, he was already messing up the first moment his Runt was giving him. He snorted his apology, going back one step to the base of the wings and massaging the scarred up tissue there.

The Runt gave a soft cry, but it wasn't a painful sound nor was it distressed. It was just like the other sounds the Runt had been chattering at him. His fingers found the feathers near the base of the wing, and they were so soft. A little babe. A nestling, as the Den Father would say.

Techno resisted the urge to grab and pull the little feathers. They were *gold gold gold* but they were a part of his Runt. His sounder. And he simply petted at the feathers before getting to work. The Runt flinched and jerked with every pat, and Techno did his best to do it with as light as touch as possible. Straightening the feathers that were askew, and gently pulling out the ones that did not belong.

The Runt was quiet.

And it bothered Techno.

Den Father was the same type of breed as Runt was. They both had wings, although Runt's was smaller. Befitting for a child. And Den Father would make noises. Chirps, coos, warbles, and sighs. That's how Techno knew that he was doing a good job preening. And yet the Runt was not making those sounds. Was he not enjoying Techno's ministrations?

The Runt gave Techno his trust after several days of working hard. Techno is going to do his *best* to make sure the Runt would not regret it.

Den Father always melted when Techno would stimulate his oil glands. Moving up higher to the Runt's curled up wings, Techno carefully pried one open and found it. Gently, he prodded at it. The babe on his lap stifled a squeak. Jumping slightly at the sensation of Techno's ministrations, before laying completely limp with a huff of breath.

That was good then. Techno did not hide the beaming smile that came. It was good to provide for his Runt. With one wing spread open, Techno did not hesitate before preening the first layer of downy feathers.

The Runt made another noise. Whispering to itself. Techno's ear flicked when he caught, "*shit shit shit*-" He didn't understand the word. But it was good if the Runt was chanting while Techno preened. *He is doing a good job*. The babe did not flinch with every touch now as Techno dragged the fingers through the feathers.

Techno hummed, pulling out the broken and *gold gold gold* feathers from the wings. Carefully laying each one on the couch in a pile. Each of these were a part of his hoard now. Even the broken and dull ones. The act of trust the Runt gave to him was *so* touching. It made his heart swell with pride.

The finished one wing, running his hands over the downy feathers before turning to the second slightly trembling wing. Techno let out a proud chuff and an assuring croon as he gently forced open the second wing. The Runt resisted for a second, but the appendage straightened with another tug from Techno's insistent fingers.

The Runt let out another squeak. And Techno paused slightly. Wasn't the Runt supposed to be chirping? Den Father chirped all the time. But then the babe began to repeat that same chant as before, "*-no stop no-*" and Techno relaxed as he started to work on the misaligned feathers.

At one point, half way done, Techno noticed the Runt was crying. Soft wet tears dripped down his face and onto Techno's clothes. He paused from his task to run his hands through the babe's *gold gold gold* hair and croon his reassurances. The Runt was not in pain. Techno would never hurt them. It must be too overwhelming. He gently bumped their foreheads together, grunting that he was almost done.

Techno did not linger after that. He methodically cleaned up the rest of the feathers until he was finished. The babe was clearly done with this. He gathered the Runt in his arms after he was done, humming his pleasure to the babe.

The fire flickered and crackled, and the babe wept in his arms until he stopped shivering. Techno stayed vigilant throughout the night until he, too, fell asleep with his sounder.

Technoblade woke up the next morning clear-headed and with a sense of déjà-vu. There was a weight on his chest, along with blonde hair obscuring his vision. The child was asleep on him while they both laid on the couch.

The only difference between the last time he woke up in this fashion was that he could move. And that he could recall how he got into this position in the first place. The memories were fuzzy, but he could remember flashes of it. The panic of 'Runt not safe' and the satisfaction of *gold gold gold* between his fingers.

Technoblade did not trust the memories of his piglin hindbrain. Instead he shifted slightly until he could sit up. The child did not stir, still asleep. And there, despite his memories telling him the truth, were two bright gold wings on the boy's back. An avian songbird. Techno didn't believe it. Not until he saw them with his own eyes.

"*Bruh.*" The word escaped him like a gut punch, leaving him gaping and breathless.

No *wonder* he was instantly thrown back into his headspace the second he saw them. Hibernation without his hoard was already rough. Leaving him irritated and on edge. But with the sudden gold thrown into his face when he was already struggling to push past his instincts would have demolished any kind of piglin hybrid.

Techno wondered mildly what Wilbur would have done if he was here to see the wings. No doubt he would have squirreled the child into his den and locked him up for a week. Just staring at the rise and fall of the feathers as the child breathed enraptured Techno's attention. The light danced and glittered.

Technoblade knew without a doubt that the kid was his.

Already his piglin side was chanting '*babe, runt, child, mine, sounder*' in his head. Techno imprinted on the kid. He had only done that twice in his life. Once to his mother when both he and Wilbur were very young. And once more when they had been adopted by Phil.

Primes, how would Phil react? Avians were territorial. And Philza was a predator avian, capable of snatching a human off the street and into the air hundreds of feet before letting go. Techno had seen when another avian had crossed paths with Phil.

Phil ripped the man's wings off and threw him off a mountain.

But the kid wasn't a predator avian, he was a songbird type. Those were rare, and closely guarded. Collectors would pay an incredible amount to get their hands on just a feather from one. Plus, the boy wasn't too old, maybe it might ignite Phil's mother hen mode. He shouldn't be a threat to Phil's territory.

Perhaps Techno and Wilbur might need to hide the kid in one of the rooms in the castle and let Phil get used to the sensation of another avian in his territory. They might have to fend their father off for a day or two, or find a very good hiding spot where Phil couldn't track the kid down.

But in the off chance that the worst happened, would Techno step in between Phil's anger and the kid?

He eyed the gold glinting on the dirty couch.

Technoblade imprinted on the kid. The boy was Techno's in the same way that Wilbur and Phil were. It would be difficult to not protect his sounder.

Besides, once he got into contact with his family he would let Phil know ahead of time. That way his instincts would have time to prepare for the sight of another avian. He would also have Niki look into any records for golden-winged songbirds. That way he could finally know something about his stubborn child.

Like his name, for instance.

And everything else.

Chapter End Notes

points to a picture of Tommy

Techno: boy, baby boy

points to a picture of Wilbur

Techno: evil

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Technoblade only had faint memories of when Phil imprinted on Wilbur and him. They were young, little piglets who had stumbled across the avian while trying to find food in the nether. Phil, the old man, could prattle on and on about how, “sickly they looked, how *cute* they were-”

At that point Wilbur would throw the nearest object at their father before Techno would grab Phil and find the nearest snowpile to dunk him into. Phil would lament about how they abused their father, and Wilbur and Techno would exchange that *look* between the two of them.

How would the kid fit into their dynamic?

Techno could imagine it- the little runt would either take Phil’s side completely and try and stop Techno, or he would join in bullying their father. The flash of golden wings at the dinner table, the laughter as Wilbur joined in the fray-

It made Techno want it so badly.

Soon, he promised himself. Soon.

Because Technoblade needed to have the kid imprint on him before the snow cleared. What else would stop the songbird from leaving him behind? Techno could clip his wings- but that thought was stopped in it’s tracks. No. *No* Techno could not hurt the gold. It was the safest option. But that would make the child hate him even more than before.

Prime Techno wanted Wilbur here. His brother was so eloquent with his words. Dripping them with honey and ensnaring anybody who would listen. Trapping even those who didn’t hear the threats hidden in the silky lyrics his brother sang. Wilbur would have had the kid wrapped around his fingers by now.

A stray image popped into Techno’s head. Wilbur sat next to the fireplace, his head tilted down as his brown hair covered his eyes as he gazed down at the kid, his wings spread out and glittering in the light. That dazed look on the songbird’s eyes as Wilbur preened him, their runt so content and happy in their arms.

Techno’s fingers itched, and his eyes traveled across the room to gaze at the golden wings. The child poked at the fire with a stick, uncaring that his feathers were a sudden target of Techno’s attention. They were messy again. Techno *wanted* to pull his fingers through the down fluff of the feathers. The faint memory he had while deep in his instincts didn’t do it justice. He wanted to soak in every detail, every noise, the sensation of the feathers, the sound of the child chirping.

Technoblade hadn't known that he wanted it so badly that it caught him off guard. He clenched his hands until his knuckles were white. No, no he couldn't. Not now.

Techno needed the kid to come to him first. There was no escaping the cabin. Techno shouldn't use force or violence to get his way, although the voices in his head chanted for it. Instead he needed to bring the child to him like a moth to a light. He needed the kid to imprint on Techno.

The problem is... Techno couldn't exactly recall *how* to do that. Wilbur and he were both young when Phil inducted them into his flock. He could recall faint memories of sitting in a warm room with plenty of gold to keep them busy. They weren't allowed, even though Wilbur wanted to go play in the snow. Phil kept dragging them back in whenever they left, his wings rustling around him nervously. Phil had been very picky about the clothes that they wore and he brushed their hair out, his talons scratching at their hair carefully.

One vivid memory was when Wilbur got it into his head to act like a baby bird. Techno could still hear the screech of, "*Phil me hungry! My stommy hungry! AHHHHHH!*" And Phil was torn between laughing hysterically to death and actually feeding the baby piglin hybrid.

Techno distinctly recalled how Phil had doted on each of them. A crow was left whenever Phil had to leave to keep an eye on them. He was very touchy as well, always curling his fingers into their hair. Making them wear his clothes. Once Phil sat them down to teach them how to preen it became a nightly ritual. Each twin taking a wing, slowly pawing through the feathers and one day finally Phil let out a satisfied chirp. A sign that the avian had claimed them as flock.

Techno had one major part down- the runt was trapped with him in this cabin. Close quarters was a good thing, even though he would prefer to be within the safe walls of the castle.

Was it akin to how piglins imprinted on their sounder?

Techno didn't even know the first step on how to drag the kid into his instincts. Piglins who needed to accept a new piglet into their sounder were dragged and poked and prodded until they were so far into their instincts that when they were handed a new babe they couldn't tell the difference between theirs and the new one. Perhaps preening might help? No, Techno knew trying anything with the child's wings again would only result in the kids' distrust.

That was another thing- trust. Techno had to prove to the runt that he was good enough to be a part of his flock. Thankfully, Techno didn't have to appeal with the kid himself, but with the animal side of him. And if Techno was too threatening- well. That wouldn't do. He needed the kid to get used to being around him. To make his guard fall. Get used to Techno's scent. But after that, Techno didn't know exactly what to do.

He would have to watch and see what makes the runt tick.

Techno leaned back against the chair, staring out the window at the snow. He had a few months to get this right. It might not happen now, as impatient as he was for the child to fall into his arms and allow himself to be coveted.

He had to be patient. Luckily, Techno was very good at that.

'Simplicity, patience, and passion. These three are your greatest treasures.' - Lao Tzu.

Tommy woke up on the couch alone. He stared at the wooden ceiling for a minute or two before sitting up. He could feel his wings under him unfurling, and the itchy feeling that he was used to was gone. It felt like he had taken a shower after living in a puddle of mud for three days. They were light and airy, the satisfying feeling of cleanliness, and his wings ruffled in happiness themselves against Tommy's will.

It made him feel sick.

Tommy could still feel the phantom sensation of fingers clawing into his feathers. It didn't hurt, even though Tommy braced himself for the pain. It made it all the more sickening as Tommy fell under a wave of pure bliss. The bird in his head was upset as much as Tommy was- only *flock* could preen him. But she- she was busy these days. And the bird had been upset over Tommy's care with his wings too.

Thank Prime Tommy didn't chirp.

Tommy wouldn't have known what to do if the bird inside of his brain decided that Techno was good enough to be flock. Just because he- he *preened* Tommy didn't mean anything! It was Techno's pig brain that did it, not because Technoblade *cared* it was literally instincts. And Tommy didn't *want* him to care either.

The bird gave Tommy a side-eye and mentally Tommy threw a chair at it. *Fuck off.*

It didn't *mean anything*. Even though Tommy's feathers felt cleaner and lighter than they had in years. Each of the feathers were straightened out correctly, and none of the dead feathers pinched and poked at the tender flesh. Techno had been so gentle, avoiding pulling and pushing the feathers against the grain, leaving Tommy feeling blissed out and melting like a puddle of goo.

Prime, it was like Techno had known how to preen an avian.

Just the memory made Tommy's skin crawl. Techno is a *predator*. There is no denying that. Tommy felt ill just having to *remind* himself of it. He wanted to kill Tommy. He would, in a heartbeat. The second Techno was out of his instincts he would go back to being an enemy. Tommy had spent days in the suffocating hold of the guy, so why is it so hard to recall that Techno wanted to cart him off to the Empire's jail and let him rot for the rest of time?

The bird in his brain cooed *'he took good care of you'* and Tommy's eyes twitched. *'Shut the fuck up.'* He thought back at it vehemently.

The cuff was the only thing saving Tommy at this point.

This was some kind of Stockholm Syndrome kind of shit.

Fuck, wasn't Tommy supposed to be the kidnapper here? Technically, wasn't this supposed to happen the other way around?

This would have never happened if Tommy hadn't just rolled over and exposed his belly. He should have fought against it- should have hissed and snarled his way out of Techno's grip. If Tommy hadn't been preened then, shit he didn't know, his dumb bird hormones wouldn't have activate and make him second guess himself.

Tommy took in a deep breath and let out a shudder. Okay, he just had to take a few steps back from this whole situation. Then Tommy turned his head and caught the eye of Technoblade, who was very clearly not controlled by his instincts and was sipping from a mug. The man looked calm and collected, his hair neatly pulled back into a long braid, and giving Tommy a calculating look.

Tommy slowly slid down on the couch cushion until he disappeared from Techno's sight. Wishing he could perish.

Son of a bitch.

Tommy stayed slumped on the couch and then-

-then he couldn't bear it anymore.

He could *hear* Techno puttering around in the background, could hear him sitting at that damned table. Every whisper of faint noise was grating. It was his only salvation.

It was like the silence was trying to *drown* Tommy. Pushing past his teeth and shoving down to suffocate his lungs, the unbearable pressure of it sinking into his stomach and making Tommy feel sick. He was ready to implode.

Tommy had forgotten what life was like with Techno always in the background. The fucking annoying grunts and snorts, the unending rumbling and chuffs, it had all been a protection. And now Techno was... well he was normal now. And all of the sounds had vanished.

Tommy slid off the couch with a surge of energy he hadn't known was building up inside of him. He couldn't- he couldn't bare to look at Technoblade with his red eyes and his fucking indieous plans he was making. Tommy's heels pounded into the ground as he threw himself into the bathroom. The door slammed shut, and Tommy breathed in the cool air in the bathroom.

It lessened the suffocation that burned it's way through him.

Tommy leaned onto the crooked sink, forcing his breaths in and out at a controlled pace. "Fuck." He whispered with emotion. The urge to slam his fist into a wall hit him, and Tommy stopped himself at the last second. "Fuck!" He said again, this time louder.

His wings ruffled behind him, agitated and he hated how good they felt. Abhorred that it took a monster with the brain of a toddler to make him feel like a human again. Despised how lost

he felt right now.

More than anything, Tommy *loathed* the silence.

Okay, so Tommy's plan on keeping Techno at a distance was already falling to pieces. He couldn't- he couldn't go back to that quiet room with only tension filling the air. Tommy lifted his head up and stared into the dirty and cracked mirror. His blue eyes were *desperate*. "Fuck." Tommy repeated for the third time. And then he let his head drop again.

He gave himself fifteen minutes to have a mental meltdown before Tommy left the safety of the bathroom. The couch groaned as Tommy threw himself back onto it, and the urge to slide down and hide again hit Tommy again. Instead, Tommy peered over it to the other occupant in the room.

"What' cha thinkin about?"

Techno's fingers tapped at the mug in his hand. He had been staring at one of the windows, and when Tommy spoke up he slowly turned to the couch. There was a controlled air around him that set Tommy on edge. "Why do you ask?" Techno asked lightly, and then lifted the mug to take another drink.

It was so... *casual*. As if the two of them chatted all the time. This was probably the first time they exchanged words without one of them getting traumatised. And when Tommy means one of them being traumatised, he was referring to himself.

"Cuz." Tommy responded. Prime, this simple conversation was both killing him and was his only salvation. "I'm bored."

Technoblade looked only *amused*.

Tommy's response wasn't supposed to be funny. Was... was Tommy missing something here? Did he like, have something in his teeth? (Tommy ducked a bit lower under the protective barrier of the couch and rubbed at his teeth before realising that probably wasn't the issue.)

"I was thinking about the story of The Count of Monte Cristo." Techno finally responded, after staring Tommy down for what felt like a million years with that strange look in his eyes. "Do you know of it?"

"No. What's it about?" Tommy's voice was muffled behind the cushion.

"It's a story of revenge." That sent a shiver down Tommy's spine. His mind was already racing at the implication. "There were two best friends. One of them, Fernand, was jealous of the other, and ruined his friend's life just so he could 'win' against the other. His friend came back as a Count, with knowledge, money, and power to destroy everything his former friend had taken from him."

Tommy couldn't reply. How could he?

Techno started to tap his fingers across the mug again. “There is a scene at the end that comes to my mind. The Count of Monte Cristo had ruined Fernand’s wealth, stolen his wife, and destroyed his name. Fernand had tried to steal the Count’s gold. But when he went to place he stashed it, all he found was nothing but a chess piece. A king.”

Technoblade tilted his head and his pink braid covered his face, “a phrase the two had shared when they found success was ‘kings to you.’ And when Fernand found that piece, his pride broke entirely. It was a mockery to the loser now. And Fernand died with absolutely nothing. And *that* was what I was thinking about.”

Tommy’s wings fluffed up and then he firmly tucked them under his back. What could he say to that? Techno had all but admitted to Tommy that he was going to, Tommy didn’t know, fucking kill him in his sleep. He was going to get his revenge.

Tommy knew that going into this job would mean that he would gain some enemies. He wasn’t a pussy, he had tons of people who wanted him dead. It was part of the job of being annoyingly good at stealing from thugs who thought they were untouchable.

The idea of being Technoblade’s target of revenge was unsettling.

The quiet was unbearable again. Tommy had only a brief respite. But it wasn’t enough, he needed- he needed to hear more.

Tommy was going to be a very big man and elect to ignore the red flags. And the fucking weird ass drama that Techno seemed to live in. Seriously? Kings to you? That’s some 18th century drama right there. And figuring that Techno dressed up like an actual pirate, that’s probably an accurate assumption. And you know what? Tommy could handle being Technoblade’s enemy. Hell, Tommy had gone up against worse.

What was worse right now was the absence of noise.

“Well?” Tommy broke the silence, still staring at Technoblade from over the back of the couch.

The man glanced back, “well what?”

“Aren’t you going to ask me what I’m thinking about?”

There was a pause.

“What are you thinking about?” Technoblade asked.

Tommy sniffed indignantly, “if two guys on the moon, and one of them killed the other with a rock, would that be fucked up or what?”

Whelp, Tommy broke the ice. Might as well swim in the water. Or in this case, poke the piglin hybrid until Techno snaps. In for a penny, in for a pound.

Tommy pulled out the cards from where they had been stashed and tossed them onto the table in front of Technoblade. The man didn't even flinch, the bastard. "Do you wanna play go fish with me?" Tommy asked, sitting down in the other seat.

Technoblade raised one eyebrow, looking vaguely amused.

"Listen, I don't know about you. But if I am going to sit here in silence for another minute I think I will go crazy." Tommy slumped onto the table. "We're stuck here with only a deck with a missing king of hearts. And I don't fucking know solitaire."

Tommy expected Technoblade to refuse. Tommy had, after all, taken Technoblade hostage.

"Fine." Techno replied, "but only if you answer my questions."

Tommy thought for a second, and then grinned. "I'll answer your questions if you win. You answer mine if I win. How's that for a deal?"

"That sounds acceptable." Techno reached over and picked the cards up. With ease he shuffled the cards out, and gave Tommy his hand.

Tommy organized the cards in his hands, and gave Techno a deadpan stare. "Do you have any threes?"

"Go fish." Techno responded, "do you have any tens?"

Tommy gave a sigh and forked over his cards. And it went back and forth. Tommy slowly relaxed as the game went on. Techno didn't seem like he was going to use the cards to like, cut his throat or something. No that he could, the cuff would prevent it. But somehow Tommy's faith in the cuff wasn't very strong.

When all of the cards were placed in stacks, Tommy could see that his stack was bigger than Techno's. His wings puffed up with his delight. But he could see Techno glance at them and he folded them back down.

"Heh, you have to answer my question." Tommy couldn't help himself as he smiled. This was literally the only positive thing he had going on for *weeks* now.

"I do."

"Do you really cut off people's hands if they steal?"

It was the first thing that came to mind, sue him. Tommy didn't have a lot of questions he wanted to ask.

Technoblade glanced over to Tommy with a cool stare. "Depends." He replied, "if it's their first offense, they are fined. Second time warrants jail time and a bigger fee. The third time they're caught is when we cut off their hand."

"Man, I can't wait to get out of here." Tommy muttered to himself, before saying, "and do you really blind the beggars here?"

Technoblade raised an eyebrow before looking down at the cards. “I don’t know, you’ll have to win to get the answer.”

Tommy scooped up the cards with a pout. “Fine. But I’ll win the next round too.” He clumsily shuffled the cards together. Smooshing the cards randomly, rather than the cool trick that Techno used.

The next game Tommy won too. “Okay, answer my question. Do you really blind the beggars?”

“No,” Techno responded, “I lied. I was trying to get a rise out of you.” It was his turn to shuffle, and he split the cards into two stacks and with a *twip* he snapped the cards into one pile.

“My opinion on the Empire has increased slightly.” Tommy replied, “but only a little.” He pinched his forefinger and thumb together.

“You have that bad of an impression of the Empire?” Techno asked.

Tommy wrinkled his nose and glanced at the windows. “I don’t like the snow. Seems like a pretty shit place to me. Do you have any queens?”

Techno let out a huff of laughter and handed over a card. And they went back to the game. Technoblade won that round, and Tommy gathered up the cards to mix them. He peered cautiously at Technoblade, wondering what he would ask Tommy.

“What’s your legal name?”

“What?” Tommy asked. “You want my name?”

“You heard me. I can’t call you a child in my head anymore.”

Tommy let out a squawk of rage. “I am not a child!”

Techno gave him a ‘bitch please’ look. “You sure look like a kid.”

“I am *not* a child. I am the biggest man you’ll ever meet. I’m the best- uh, *man* ever. And I have wives. So many wives. They’re weeping right now because they miss me, the greatest man ever.” Tommy almost, *almost* said he was a thief out loud.

“Right.” Techno agreed dryly. “Are you going to answer my question?”

Well. It wasn’t like Tommy’s legal name could be found in any database in the world. It wouldn’t hurt him to give up this information. Tommy let out a sigh, “my *legal* name is... Theseus.” Just saying left a bad taste in his mouth. “I don’t like it very much.” Tommy averted his eyes, missing the moment when Technoblade’s pupils dilated.

“Theseus,” Technoblade said ponderingly, as if he was tasting the word like it was a fine wine, “it is a powerful name.”

“It’s lame.” Tommy countered, “just like a name like Tech-no-blade.”

“I think Technoblade is classy.” Techno responded with a huff, and took his newest stack of cards. And the game resumed.

Tommy won another round, which prompted Tommy to ask, “what’s the prettiest thing in the Empire?”

Technoblade responded, “the gardens around the castle when the sun rises.”

Tommy hummed appreciatively at the response.

The next round was Techoblade’s win. “What is your favorite color?”

“Red.” Tommy responded instantly.

And it was... nice. Time flew by faster than Tommy thought it could in this cabin. It was dark when they finally stopped, and it was only because it was getting too hard to see the cards with just the firelight. Tommy curled up on the mattress, and Techno took the couch. And it was so *fucking nice* that Tommy felt like he was hallucinating.

It was like a switch was flipped.

Tommy woke up to the smell of food in the air. Tommy hadn’t tried to heat up any food since the first night, and he had suffered from cold canned food whenever he was hungry. But he could hear the liquid simmering in the pot, and when he opened his eyes Techno was next to the fire with a wooden spoon in his hand. The smell was tempting him to get out of bed.

“Breakfast is ready, Theseus.” Techno didn’t glance at him, somehow already knowing that Tommy was awake.

“Fuckin creepy.” Tommy responded, “do you have eyes in the back of your head?”

Techno only gave an amused huff as he took the pot from the fire and put it on the table. Tommy stretched before jumping to his feet in one smooth move. His wings fluttered on his back, and Tommy glanced back at them before an idea occurred to him.

Where *did* his bracelet go?

Tommy paused and looked around. He hadn’t seen it since Techno took it off of him. Tommy had been too busy dealing with *things* that he hadn’t even noticed where it had gone. Let’s see. He had been by the fire... next to the couch... Tommy crouched to peer under the seat.

“What are you doing?”

“Looking for something, dickwad.” Tommy raised his head when he couldn’t see it. He grabbed one of the couch cushions and raised it.

“What are you looking for?”

Tommy ignored the question as he pulled each cushion off of the couch. The bracelet wasn't there. If Tommy wasn't the one to move it then Technoblade must've. Enchanted bracelets didn't just *walk off* like nothing. He looked over at Techno with an accusing stare.

"What? Breakfast is getting cold." Techno dished up two bowls and set them on the table. He grabbed one and started to eat. Unaffected by Tommy's best 'murder face' glare.

Okay. Tommy had to play this cool. He had to act like everything was super fine. He needed his bracelet back. As much as he loved his wings, he would much prefer them to be hidden away. He approached the table and sat down.

"So." Tommy casually said, like a normal person, "how are you?"

"What do you want?" Techno responded.

Tommy spluttered, "me? Want something? Technoblade, I would never." He grabbed the bowl and shoved a spoonful of beans into his mouth. He sucked in a breath because, *ow ow ow it was too hot*.

Techno only gave that 'I don't believe you' hum. "I am doing fine. And you, Theseus?"

Tommy's eyes watered as he cupped a hand around his mouth. Breathing around the hot food in his mouth. "Super cool." He gulped, "totally amazing."

"Looks like you're having a moment there."

"Shut up." Tommy croaked, finally swallowing the hot food. Feeling it burn all the way down. "Just because I told you my name doesn't mean you can use it." He grumbled.

"What's wrong with having the name Theseus?" Techno asked, "I like it."

"It's boring. Stuffy." Tommy responded, avoiding Techno's eyes. "I'm named after a dead made-up guy."

"Theseus was a hero."

Tommy scowled even harder, "I'm not a hero."

Technoblade tilted his head, "I didn't say you were one."

Tommy pointed his spoon threateningly at Technoblade. "Good! Because I'm not one. And anybody who says anything else gets knifed. Including you."

Technoblade snorted, "I doubt you could stab me."

"Don't make challenges you know I'll win." Tommy replied. "I'm like, super evil. The greatest villain ever. I stab people for fun."

"You?" Techno gave him a *look*, "a villain?"

Tommy crossed his arms in a huff, “I got you here, didn’t I?”

Techno gave a slow nod. “Yes, yes you did. But we are also snowed in until spring. So...” He trailed off, giving Tommy a judgemental look.

Tommy threw his hands into the air, “I didn’t know it snowed so much in the Empire!”

“It’s in the name, Theseus. *Antarctica Empire*. We live at the bottom of the planet.”

Tommy let out a growl of frustration. And shoveled another spoonful of hot beans into his mouth before he remembered to blow on it. “Hot.” He breathed around the mouthful of food, waving his hands at his mouth. Then he caught the look that Techno gave him and then flipped him off.

Techno cracked a smile.

The cards were out again, but this time they were playing poker. As much as Tommy loved go fish, there was only so much he could take. However, Tommy realized that he was much better at playing the other card game than poker when Techno laid down his third royal flush.

Tommy thought that poker was all up to chance but fuck him, he kept on losing.

“Alright, what’s your question this time?” Tommy let out a defeated sigh. He threw his hand of a couple twos and threes onto the table.

“Most people tend to avoid the Empire.” Technoblade leaned back in his chair. It squeaked slightly, “especially if it means they are under the thumb of the Syndicate. Why aren’t you?”

Tommy paused, “you’re asking me why I don’t avoid the Empire because it’s ruled by supervillains?”

Techno gave a nod. Tommy couldn’t help himself, and laughed. He gestured his hand around the small cabin, “do you *see* a member of the Syndicate here? They’re probably doing supervillain things, like jaywalking or some shit. They’re more concerned with their own things. I am not afraid of them because I’m just a small little criminal,” a lie, “and they’re more concerned with the bigger things.”

Techno looked amused by this. “You don’t think they won’t care that the general of their armies is missing?”

“Probably.” Tommy said, “but I am pretty confident that they can’t find us. So...” Tommy shrugged, “by the time that they will locate you, I’ll be gone.”

“You’re that confident you can leave the Empire?”

Tommy gave him a slow blink, and gave him a shit eating grin. “Oh, absolutely. *Without a doubt.*”

Technoblade didn't say another word as he dealt out the next set of cards. Tommy got lucky, and within two rounds he won. He slapped down a full house with a beaming smile, and Techno threw down a handful of sixes. "Pay up bitch."

"What is the question?"

"Do you know where my bracelet is?" Tommy crossed his arms. He had been dying to ask that all day. His wings puffed up again.

Techno gave him that held tilt that showed he was thinking. Tommy narrowed his eyes. Techno was too calm. "Have you checked by the fire?" Techno asked, and if Tommy hadn't been watching him answer questions for literally the last day and a half he would have missed how Techno didn't act right.

"This morning." Tommy replied, on guard. "I checked there this morning."

"It was black, right? Made up of some thick string?" Techno glanced over to the fire, "I don't know where else it could be. I thought it was still over there."

Tommy stood up, a sinking feeling in his stomach. He marched over to the fire place, staring into the flames. There was a thick layer of ash from them constantly burning wood. He didn't see anything. But that also didn't mean it wasn't hidden. Tommy picked up the axe, which was still leaning up against the wall since Technoblade stole it from his room, and poked at the logs.

Sure enough, Tommy caught the tell tale signs of cord that didn't fully burn away under one of the logs. He felt his wings bristle in anger as he stood there, frozen. "You threw it into the fire?" He asked flatly.

Tommy turned to Technoblade, and the man had the gall to not even *pretend* that it was an accident. "You threw it in the fire? *Why?*"

Techno shrugged, "I didn't like it." He said it casually. Like he threw out a piece of garbage instead of Tommy's priceless trinket.

There was an angry screech burning up inside of Tommy. But he swallowed it down, choking and killing the sound. Tommy wanted to let it out, along with all of the vitriol and hate he could muster. He wanted to stomp and scream and cry because that bracelet was *important*. He took long steadying breaths. It was one of his treasures. One of the few that he carried with him.

And now it is gone.

"Huh." Was all Tommy could say. He dropped the axe and it hit the ground with a thud. He reached over and snatched the stretched out sweater from the ground and strode into the kitchen. He took one of the kitchen knives and cut two uneven slits in the back of the sweater, before awkwardly throwing it on.

His rage was building. *This* was why he liked the bracelet. He could put on clothes without the wings in the way. *This* was why he used the enchantment. His anger spiking each time his wings bumped into a wall or the counters. It was a constant reminder that it was *gone*. That Tommy had to deal with his wings instead of ignoring them now. His hands shook as a volcano was erupting inside of him.

And then Tommy exited the kitchen and moved to the front door in an angry stride.

“What are you doing?” Techno asked him, and *oh* this was what made him concerned, eh? Tommy could even *look* at him. The chair scraped back with a creak.

“I’m leaving.” Tommy snapped.

“Theseus,” Techno said with maybe just a hint of panic, “don’t-”

But Tommy was gone, slamming the door open, letting in a gust of wind and icy cold air. He took three steps before spreading his wings and taking off. The snow blinded him for a second, but the rage pushed him forwards.

Behind him he heard a muffled yell.

He left.

He *left*.

Techno raised his fist and slammed it into the doorway. He couldn’t take another step. His body refused to, even though his instincts screamed at him to *move and bring the runt back home*.

This wasn’t his home. This was a prison. And Techno could not leave it. The damn cuff that he tried to pry off was forcing him to *stay*. Like a dog.

Baring his teeth in anger, Techno howled in the cabin. He lifted his wrist up high and *slammed* it back down onto the table. Leaving a dent in the wood. He did it again, and *again*. The only kind of violence he had been able to achieve so far in his captivity was against himself.

The cuff bit into his flesh, cutting a thin scratch on his wrist.

The blood was thick and hot. And for a moment Techno could reach out and feel it, begging for him to use it, but then the enchantment glowed on the iron cuff and Technoblade’s power was shut down just as fast as a train hitting a stationary wall. He couldn’t use his powers. Yet another restrictive trap.

Was this what Wilbur’s victims felt? Knowing they could do nothing, helpless against the world?

His runt was outside.

His runt was in *danger*.

Techno made another step towards the door, and his limbs locked up again. He had to move away with a frustrated breath and slammed his wrist against the wood once again.

And with a dull snap, a crack formed on the cuff.

Chapter End Notes

Techno: *monologs a story of revenge*

Tommy: huh I wonder what this means?

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy stumbled back into the cabin, thoroughly frozen and numb. He had tried to spend as much time as he could outside. But the negative degree weather bit into his feathers and it made his wings numb. It could have been twenty minutes, it could have been an hour. But it felt so short compared to how much anger Tommy felt. He wanted to leave. To just *go*.

But the furthest Tommy could get was a hundred yards out before his wings folded up and dumped him into the snow. It was simply too cold. His wings weren't made for the snow and ice, hell he couldn't even fly very high because of the temperature of the atmosphere on a regular day.

What's the point of wings if he couldn't just fly to the moon and back?

An absolute disappointment, that's what they were.

Tommy huddled under one of the pine trees as long as he could, his clothes were wet and freezing to his skin. It was so numbing. But it was also so freeing. Getting out of that cabin was the best and worst thing to happen.

Getting away from *Techno* was better.

Tommy hadn't realized how much it stressed him having a predator lurking over his shoulder in a confined space. Even the bird in his head was relaxing. It had been *weeks* in that cabin and only now, as he was freezing to death, did Tommy fully understand how much it's been affecting him.

He needed to get out more. Even for a few minutes. It was just too much for his little heart.

When the numbness began to retreat and the cold began to burn, and Tommy stopped shivering, he finally walked back to the cabin. The snow was piled up high, but Tommy was light. His bones were hollow. And his feet only sank to his knees as he sluggishly returned to warmth.

After this, Tommy is never *ever* going to return to this shit country. *Ever*. It didn't matter if they were going to give him all the riches in the world, Tommy was getting out and never looking back.

The cabin was easy to find, the smoke curling out of the ice covered chimney. Tommy shuddered, not due to the cold, but at the thought of staying inside of there again. But he needed to survive. And the yawning trap of the cabin was his only hope to live until the end of winter.

Tommy threw open the door and stumbled inside, snow slipping off of his legs and hair like a dog. He closed the door with a hard slam, as the warm air began to pinch and hurt. He let out a breath that was less like a sigh and more like a painful shaking hiccup.

He could feel the weight of red eyes on him. The bird inside of him warned him of danger. But Tommy was too angry. Too angry, too tired, too annoyed to care. He could even *look* at the man. Instead he stumbled towards the fire, even though the heat was hurting and biting at his nerves.

Tommy glanced down at his wet clothes. He should... he should get them off. But the thought of struggling against his wings and the heavy cloth was so much effort that Tommy didn't have it in him. He just curled up to the fire, folding his wings around him protectively.

The silence was grating.

It was becoming a physical pain now. Scratching at his ear drums, making them itch and Tommy wanted to claw at it until it was a bloody mess. Anything was better than the quiet. Anything.

Tommy let out a pathetic little warble.

And then he heard the rustle and footsteps, and then his bird recalled that there was a predator and the sound quickly cut off. Leaving him to the quiet. Tommy choked, even he couldn't break the unending silence that surrounded him.

A warm hand brushed up against Tommy's wings and he flinched away. "Fuck off." Tommy's voice was hoarse and raw. And he coughed suddenly.

There was a sigh, and then those hands were back on him, pulling his wings down and away, revealing Tommy's flushed face. Tommy stared up at Technoblade and gave a weak *hiss*. The piglin hybrid didn't blink, instead his hands brushed and picked at Tommy's ruined sweater. Tommy hissed again, but it was soft and barely noticeable. The bird wanted him to cower. But Tommy wanted to pick a fight. But he had neither the strength or the will to do either.

"Come on, Theseus, put your arms up." Techno leaned in and with a smooth jerk he was taking the sopping wet sweater off. Tommy blinked warily, and did *not* move his arms. Technoblade didn't even seem to care, his hands, so warm so big, came up and nudged at his elbows until he could maneuver the cloth over Tommy's head and off of his wings.

"What-" Tommy asked, but then Techno grabbed his equally wet and cold shirt and was tugging it off as well.

"You need to get warm, kid." Techno rumbled, "and sitting in wet clothes won't help you in the slightest."

That was true... but Tommy did not appreciate whatever was going on here. He shifted away, and then had to slap at Techno's hands as they tried to unbutton his crusty jeans. "Fuck off." He repeated, when he could find his voice again.

“You are literally suffering from hypothermia.” Techno sighed, and then yanked on Tommy’s jeans. Tommy clutched at them before they could slide any further down his hips.

“I don’t need your help.” He snarled back, and then shuddered as the bird inside of him screeched ‘*don’t antagonize the predator!!!*’ “Get off. I can do it myself.” He coughed again, weakly.

Techno’s hands stayed there for a second before they left. And then Techno was just *standing there*. Staring at Tommy.

He could feel his face flush and his wings curled around him, Tommy suddenly very aware of his naked chest. “Why are you staring, bitch face? You’re not some pervert, are you?”

Techno let out a very pig-like snort before turning away. “Take it off. I won’t look.”

“You better not.” Tommy muttered. And then his numb-burning fingers fumbled with the button on his jeans. It took a few tries before it was undone and he slid off the heavy material. His legs tingled with the sudden warmth of the air. There was no chance in hell that Tommy was taking off his boxers, even if they were wet and cold.

“Throw the blanket over here.” Tommy said, bitterly. Techno moved over to the mattress and snatched up the quilt. Tommy could see him turning around, “hey! I said don’t look, bastard!”

The older man let out a sigh, and then threw the blanket at Tommy. “You don’t have anything I haven’t seen before.”

“So you are admitting it! You wrongun!” Tommy hissed, snatching at the blanket and curling it around his shoulders. Bundling up until only his head was poking out of it.

“No, I am a general who lived in barracks before.” Techno sighed, “can I look now?”

“No! And that’s exactly what a pervert would say.” Tommy shot back.

Tommy could see Techno reach up and pinch the bridge of his nose. Ha! Score one for bird boy.

“Okay, I’m turning around. Whether you’re decent or not.” Techno said, and then Tommy was faced with that burning stare.

“Creep.” Tommy bit out. “Bitch. Pissboy.”

Technoblade raised one eyebrow, and then he was walking towards Tommy. Oh shit. He wasn’t preparing for the guy to get *closer*. His legs were still cold and unfeeling, and all Tommy could do was scooch an inch backwards before Techno grabbed him.

Tommy did not *squeal* as he was lifted into the air. He was a bird. Birds don’t... make weird high pitched noises. “Put me down!” Tommy said, almost breathless. “Put me down right now, or I’ll kill you! I’ll-”

“Uhuh,” Techno responded, and Tommy was being lowered. No wait, Tommy wasn’t being set down, Techno was still holding him. Techno was the one sitting down on the couch, the frame of it groaning slightly by the weight.

“What are you-” Tommy let out an annoyed huff, “let me go!” And he wriggled but Techno grabbed the blanket and tugged it so it was tighter around the avian. Tommy could kick his feet but that was pretty much it.

“You need to get warm.” Techno’s voice was all rumbling, “and if you don’t stop moving then I will *make you*.”

“As if you-”

There was a thunderous sound. It wasn’t the soft *chuff-chuffs* that Tommy had listened to before, nor the grumbles and huffs that he knew. It was dangerous. Curling around Tommy, threatening and so *deep* that it made Tommy’s teeth rattle in his head.

Predator.

His limbs locked up and Tommy stopped breathing all together. His eyes watered immediately. The bird in his head took over. *Stay. STAY.*

“Good boy.” The Predator said, pleased.

Tommy shuddered at the sound. His wings twitched. For a second his fight or flight response was activated, but it was quickly shut down as his body was trapped. There is no chance. No escape.

“Come here,” the deep voice said, and Tommy’s petrified form was adjusted. The blanket loosened, and Tommy was gently laid down in the crook of the Predator’s arm. A hand reached up and touched Tommy’s jaw, making the boy flinch. “Shh, it’s okay.” And the fingers guided Tommy’s head to rest on the Predator’s shoulder, Tommy’s nose pressed into the his neck.

That hand came up again and gently petted Tommy’s hair. “Hey, you gotta breathe. Come on. Breathe Theseus.”

Tommy let out a halting breath and sucked in air. His lungs were burning. He took short breaths, as the arm holding him up tightened. *Stay!* The bird called out. *Freeze.*

“Shh, it’s okay.” That gentle rumble that seemed to make Tommy shake inside and out. “It’s okay. Take deep breaths. Follow my lead.” And the Predator slowly exhaled. Tommy tried. He really did. But halfway through each inhale and exhale the bird would *scream* and he would have to stop.

The Predator didn’t get mad when Tommy couldn’t follow it’s instructions. Instead it only reverberated soothingly, petting his back and trying to get him to follow his breaths.

So slow, it was like molasses, Tommy could breathe in his frozen state. His limbs were starting to shake uncontrollably. His wings rattled painfully. He must’ve- must’ve made a

noise because the Predator made purr before shifting around. Then it's hands were under the blanket, touching *his feathers*.

Tommy let out a choked sob. Only his flock could touch his wings. It scared the bird witless at the touch of a non-flock member caressing his feathers. And the rumbling purr grew louder. "Shh, I won't touch them." And the hand slid under Tommy's wings to hold onto his back. It was so hot. The feeling burned his cold skin.

The hand moved up and down, the fingers trailing the two thick scars on his back. It didn't hurt. He couldn't feel it half of the time, the nerves were damaged there. It was terrifying at first, but when the Predator didn't move to kill him, Tommy slowly relaxed.

His heart was still hammering like a jackhammer in his chest. But Tommy melted as he grew warm. A low hum filled the air. Protecting Tommy from the silence. His nose was still pressed into the side of the Predator's neck. The scent of fire and nether lulling him to sleep.

Techno craned his head to stare down at the sleeping kid on top of him. It felt like a situation like this was becoming more common. The golden hair resting on his shoulders as the child slumbered on Techno.

For the first time, Techno wished he had a phone. Not to contact his family to get him out of this hellhole, but to send a mocking picture to Wilbur. The urge to show off to his brother was so powerfully strong. The image of a golden child asleep on Techno with the words, '*found him first*' would be the start of a war.

Wilbur would absolutely *adore* the kid. From the second Techno let out a warning growl and the feisty child folded like wet cardboard, he knew that Theseus would be his brother's favorite new toy.

No. Not a toy.

Techno scented Theseus lightly. He could still smell the claim he put on the kid days ago. Sounder. His little runt.

Family.

Phil might have the final say in the matter, but Techno knew that Theseus belonged with them just as much as Wilbur and he did. The fire in his blue eyes. The golden locks that curled when they were damp. The *wings*.

The beautiful golden feathers that drew Techno in until he was too trapped to escape. *His his* the voices chanted. Chat already claimed the boy. Cooing and awwing over his behavior. Laughing at the insults the kid threw at Techno.

If Theseus didn't have wings, Techo would have thought he was a cat hybrid. Easy to wind up and anger, hissing insults and sulking in the corner. It was easy to rile the kid up. It's been so long since Techno faced such a brash personality, and it was entertaining to see what Theseus would do.

Leaving Techno behind, trapped and unable to follow...

That was unacceptable.

Yes, Techno did throw the bracelet into the fire. The enchantment on it was already fraying, and give it a few more months it would break. But the idea of Theseus trying to hide his wings again from Techno was offensive. It took Theseus a few days to notice it's absence, and Techno had hoped that the fire would have destroyed the remains of it. He would have played ignorant.

But Theseus threw a fit and *ran*.

Just the thought made Techno's fingers tighten. He had debated if he should go out of the cabin, the enchantment was still *there* but it didn't have the same power that it had before. It was like a minor warning rather than forcing Techno to stop entirely. He could push through the magic. And he had gone out into the snow only to stop when he spotted Theseus hiding under a tree.

He waited until Theseus was about to come inside again before he returned to the cabin. The cold didn't bother him, a brute piglin hybrid was tough and that was the same when it came to freezing temperatures.

Techno needed to get the kid to trust him. And by revealing that the enchantment wasn't working anymore wasn't going to aid him in this fact. No, Techno finally had the power to do whatever he wanted. Hell, if he was determined enough he was certain he could power his way to the nearest settlement and find his way home. But his runt stayed in his hand.

Wilbur and Phil can wait.

Techno was going to take his time.

The idea of showing up back at the castle with a fully imprinted clingy songbird in his arms just to rub it into his family's faces was just too powerful.

The pulsing creeping red vines that were as thick as a bus covered the landscape. They stretched out like worms, slowly slithering across the ground below. Red and black particles floated in the air like ash, whipping across Tommy's face as he stared out into the Badlands.

The heavy weight of the Egg in his arms.

There were footsteps behind him, heavy and loud. Tommy jerked as if he could continue running, before stopping. There was no going back now. He was trapped. A cliff on one side, his feet inches from the drop, and the minions of the Egg behind him.

"Give up now." A monotone voice called out. There was no emotion behind it. There never was. Even when Ant had looked him in the eye and apologized before trying to sacrifice him. The mind-controlled minions of the Egg could only speak flatly. "Return what you stole, and give in to your fate."

The wind whipped at Tommy's face again. Tugging his hair over Tommy's eyes. He closed them for a brief second. And when they opened he knew what he had to do with a sinking feeling in his gut.

There were only two choices available here. Tommy turned around, staring at the people who had their free will taken away from them. And he had to question himself, was his own life worth the world's demise? If he gave the Egg back he could live, but doom humanity. But if he did not, Tommy would, without a doubt, die.

"Did you know," Tommy shouted over the wind, "that my name is Theseus?"

Antfrost gave him an inquisitive look. "No, I did not know your name, Red. Please hand over the Egg."

Tommy choked back a sob. A tear traced down his face. "It means," Tommy choked out as he shifted the Egg in his hands until one was freed, and he flipped up his middle finger. "That I was always destined to fall."

And the world tilted sideways as Tommy stepped back and leaned into the wind's embrace. One last flight. All the way down to the ground below.

Fuck, he really was a hero, wasn't he? Dream was rubbing off on him.

Oh my brave little boy, you have too much to live for.

(A wet cloth was pressed up against Tommy's forehead, and he sighed with relief. He was burning up. His throat burned, parched and dry like he had a desert in his neck. An insistent cough triggering constantly- even though he didn't have the energy nor the breath to stop it. Tommy let out a sad little sigh, and a warm hand took his and held it tightly.)

"Tommy, what the fuck?" Tubbo burst into the room. "What the hell are you doing?" The cold stone room of their base in Pogtopia was small and echoey. Making Tubbo's words flip back and forwards until the sound petered out.

Tommy rested his head in his hands on a wooden chair. A fire crackled in the corner. It's warm light casting dark shadows that loomed over the boy. "I'm ending this." Tommy said, his voice muffled as he held his hands over his mouth. "Just- just a little bit more, Tubs. I can See the end- just a bit more."

He heard the footsteps come closer. And there was the soft sound as Tubbo dropped to his knees, and Tommy could feel the gentle touch as his best friend pulled his hands away from his face.

"Tommy," Tubbo whispered with pain in his voice, "oh Prime. You need to stop."

Tommy let out a mad little laugh, "I can't. I- I'm so close, Big T. We can end the war- with the least amount of damage. I know it. I have Seen it." Tommy could feel the warm tears falling from his eyes with a sting.

"How many fingers am I holding up?"

Tommy paused, "uh, two."

Tubbo made a pained noise, "I'm not holding my hand up, Tommy. How much can you see?"

"I can See everything." Tommy replied stiffly.

"No, I mean with your eyes."

Tommy fidgeted a bit. "I pushed myself a bit." He evaded the question. And then he felt something wet drip onto his hands in Tubbo's grasp. Tommy blinked, even though- even though he couldn't see, "Tubbo are you crying?"

"You're blind." Tubbo's voice wet and he gave out an audible sob. "You can't see anything, can you, Tommy?"

"Not right now," and Tommy reached up and pulled Tubbo into a hug. "I'll get my sight back in a bit. No biggy."

"No biggy?" Tubbo sounded hysterical. "You can't see Tommy. I wouldn't call that 'no biggy.'"

"It's just the price I have to pay." Tommy responded, "it's a bit shitty, but it's worth it. I made a promise to you that I'll help out in any way I can. And I think making this civil war thing as peaceful as possible without bloodshed is pretty important."

"I don't want you to ruin yourself, Tommy." Tubbo mumbled into Tommy's shirt.

Tommy laughed, "I'm not ruining myself, not here. Not ever. I'm too big of a man for that, I'll have you know. My many wives agree with me on this. And besides, it's for a good cause. I'll be back to normal in... a month?"

"I'm sorry," Tubbo said, "I'm so sorry."

"Eh," Tommy shrugged, "it's for L'Manburg. After you take over, make me a statue of a beautiful woman. We'll call it even."

"Deal."

(Tommy woke up with a shuddering gasp- his eyes darting around and yet he couldn't focus- couldn't breathe.

A soothing voice pulled him back down onto something soft. "Calm down, you're okay. It's going to be okay."

Tommy shivered and curled up again. His heart rate slowed again, and he felt *safe*.)

Tommy was in a nest of darkness. He was so cold, and yet- so warm. A content chirp fell from his lips as he wriggled further into the nest. A woman laughed, his flock, and a warm hand brushed his hair back.

“Hello, sweetie.” She murmured, her fingers curling into his hair and scratching perfectly. Tommy let out a low warble of affection, curling into her touch. “It has been a while, hasn’t it? My little one.”

The hand pet his hair, and Tommy wanted to throw himself into her embrace. To curl up and press against her ribs until he was safe. Hidden from the world and loved. His hands curled up in the silk of her dress, and he pressed his face against her shoulder.

(The scent of fire and iron and the faint odor of the nether lingered against his senses. A warm hand was pressed up against his back, and it was too warm- too hot. Tommy could feel the sweet stickiness of fever weighing his bones down.)

No, no that wasn’t right. Flock smelled like flowers. It reminded Tommy of dried up roses that were seconds away crumbling into dust. Tommy gave out a chirp, and threw his wings around her. He had missed her so much.

“I missed you too, darling.” She gave out a hum which sounded so beautiful that it made Tommy want to cry. It had been months. Nearly a year since he had seen her. She was so busy though. “I’m sorry that I’ve been away for so long.” Her fingers still brushing his hair fondly. “I received your gift by the way.”

Tommy perked up. He didn’t know if it had worked or not. He let out a questioning peep. “Oh yes,” she laughed, “yes it is lovely. The necklace is gorgeous, I haven’t taken it off since I found it.” She grabbed his hand and guided it up to her neck, and Tommy could feel the silver and dark opals that he had stolen for her. “I love it so much. It’s been a while since I have been given a present, especially one as beautiful as this.”

Tommy cooed in happiness. Flock loved his gift. Flock loved him.

(“Theseus, can you drink?” A hand was holding him up, something cold and bothersome was at his lips. The hard glass pinched his lip between his lower teeth, and something cold entered his mouth. There was a faint whining noise, and that hot hand rubbed the space between his wings. “You need to take a sip, runt. Just a sip. Swallow it.”)

“Oh my lovely sunshine,” she sighed, “I’m sorry for ignoring you for so long.” Her fingers moved away from his hair and Tommy groaned with disappointment. “Your wings have lost some of their gleam.” But then those hands were on his feathers, and Tommy’s mouth went dry because flock was going to preen him.

If Tommy could move, he would dance. Unfettered joy bubbled up within him because he had missed his flock so much, and now she was going to take care of him. He let out a shaking chirp of happiness, craning his wings out so she could have a better angle.

("You're doing so good, Theseus. So good, just another sip for me, please?" And there was more cold liquid in his mouth. Tommy's throat hurt. It hurt so much and it was a strain to swallow. But that hand moved from his back to his neck, massaging it gently. Forcing him to take another gulp. "That was great, Theseus. Thank you. Can you take another drink for me?")

Tommy let out a warbled whine.

Those fingers touched his feathers and yes! Yes, it felt- it felt so good. Tommy could start crying right now just from the relief. He wanted this to never end.

(A wet cloth was placed on his forehead, dulling the fever that made him feel like he was burning alive. A low reassuring rumble to his right made the tight feeling in his chest ease slightly.)

Tommy shuddered as she gently eased a broken feather from his wings, and he let out a coo of comfort. She laughed, her hands coming up to cup his face. Wait! She stopped preening him. No.

(The heat was beginning to cool. His throat still burned and his head throbbed, but the never ending fever broke. A hand was carding through his sweaty hair, a murmur of reassurances like a prayer echoed around him.)

"I'm so sorry, sunshine." She scratched at the perfect place, and Tommy tilted his head limply in her hold. "I'm so sorry, but I have to go."

"No, don't leave me."

("Theseus?")

"I have to. I could only stay for a little bit." A gentle kiss was pressed to his forehead.

"Please-" Tommy's voice broke, "please don't go. I don't wanna leave-"

("Shh, it's okay. I'm here, Theseus." Those strong hands lifted him up and Tommy was held tightly. "I won't go.")

"I'll come and visit. Sooner this time." She was like a ghost, fading away even as Tommy clutched at her tightly. He let out a cry of pain, his flock was leaving. She had only just started to preen and she was going away again. "Don't cry, my little one. You are in safe hands."

"I don't want to be alone anymore." Tommy sobbed out, tears leaking freely. "I don't- I want my flock. I want you."

("I won't let you go. I promise. You don't have to be alone anymore, Theseus.")

There was a gentle pat on his head, and Tommy let out one last sob. "Goodbye, my sweet. It's time for you to wake up." She said, and Tommy was alone .

(“You’re mine. I won’t let you go again.”)

His body ached. The sound of his heart beating a drum pounded like an anvil behind his eyes. The gross feeling of sticky sweat and greasy hair made him feel even more like shit. Tommy’s mouth was dry, and somehow still tasted like mud. He blinked slowly at the ceiling and let out a raspy breath. Damn, even his nose was drier than the desert. Tommy was, for the lack of a better term, feeling pretty shitty.

There was a shuffle of noise, and a door closed. A wave of cool air washed over Tommy’s face, like a small breath of fresh air, and the first thing Tommy noticed with his sluggish thoughts was that there was snow all over the floor. Then next thing he saw was Technoblade’s boots were also covered in the icy white frost.

A crashing thump as Techno dropped a load of wood onto the ground next to the fireplace. That woke Tommy up from his stupor, and that’s when he took stock of his surroundings. The blanket was wrapped around him like a burrito, not giving him much space to move under it’s tight embrace. “What-” Tommy muttered, his voice like a whisper. It hurt too. “What the fuck?”

And then Techno was there, his cold hand resting on Tommy’s forehead. It was brief respite from the headache that Tommy had, but also- what the fuck?

“Your fever has gone down.” Techno replied, “but you’re still too warm.”

“Probably because I’m next to a fire, dipshit.” Tommy responded, and then he sat up. At least, he tried to. Techno had to put one hand on his shoulder and push him down gently, with no real force at all, and Tommy collapsed back onto the couch. His ego took a hit. Tommy is a big man! Men don’t give up without a fight.

Men also didn’t feel like absolute garbage, but Tommy chose to ignore that.

“Let me up!” Tommy pushed against the blanket, trying to wriggle his arms out from underneath it. “I don’t need your help!” With more effort than he would have liked to admit, Tommy freed himself from his prison.

“Right. Getting sick after throwing a tantrum and running away is so cringe.” Techno replied wryly. He stepped away from Tommy, just as the blonde began to sputter with rage.

“I am not throwing a tantrum! You dipshit! Fucker!” Tommy cried out, his hands coming up and flipping Techno off. “You- you destroyed my stuff!” Already the effort of sitting up and speaking was making him winded.

Techno turned away like the big pussy he was! Coward! Couldn’t even face Tommy’s wrath head on, he had to hide like a bitch. Tommy could hear him poking at the fire with a stick, and adding on another damp log.

Wait a second.

“Since when are you able to go outside?” Tommy asked faintly, his blood leaving his face. There was snow all over the ground, and Techno’s boots were wet. Tommy knew for a *fact* that Techno couldn’t leave- Tommy had used the enchantment to keep him in the cabin.

“Since you said I could.” Techno responded, without turning around. “You were very sick, pretty delirious, so I don’t think you can recall it.”

“Bullshit.” Tommy shot back, without the fire and brashness he normally had. “There is *no way* I would have let you out. Even if I was sick.”

Techno turned to give him a cool look. He then raised his arm, letting the sleeve fall down to expose the cuff. It was still glowing, still working. “I wouldn’t be able to go outside if you hadn’t. We ran out of wood to burn, and we were going to freeze to death. And you said, ‘*Technoblade you can go outside.*’ Do you believe me now?”

Tommy swallowed, his throat feeling like sandpaper. “I guess.” For the life of him, Tommy couldn’t recall ever doing that. But he must’ve if Technoblade was free to leave. Shit, what number was that? Number five? Six? Tommy’s brain was so muddled he couldn’t think clearly. His brain started to hurt more as he tried to focus, and decided to think about it later.

With the anger that had allowed Tommy to move burning out, Tommy suddenly felt exhausted. There was a type of weight that made him feel so much clumsier, pushing him down and making even the smallest motion feel like a marathon.

“You should get some sleep.” Techno said, and Tommy *was going to do just that*. But since Techno said it Tommy wasn’t going to.

“Nah. I’m wide awake. Super good.” Tommy replied, staring daggers at the piglin hybrid. And then he stuck out his tongue. To show dominance. Yeah! That’s what he was doing. Being the alpha.

Technoblade rolled his eyes. The audacity. The absolute disrespect. But he got up and walked away. Which meant that Tommy won! Tommy buried his face into the quilt and wow, it even smelled like the piglin hybrid. Actually... Tommy sniffed at the air. The whole place reeked of the guy. Sheesh. It was like he was marking his territory.

Tommy was too tired to notice that the bird inside his head wasn’t protesting against this new change. The scent of a predator around him, and yet it stayed quiet when normally it would be alarmed by this smell. Instead it pokes its head out of it’s nest, it’s beady eyes watching.

Calculating.

Pondering.

Scrutinizing.

Bird: guys I think I found the imposter. Hes super sus.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Lets do the time warp again.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wasn't going to let Techno out of his sight when he was outside. His bones ached and his body throbbed with each heartbeat. Recovering from being ill sucked ass. But when Techno looked like he was going to go outside for some more wood, Tommy bundled himself up in the blanket and followed.

Techno stopped at the doorway, giving Tommy a *look*. "No."

"You can't tell me no." Tommy replied horsley. "I'm the big man here."

"No."

"Fuck off."

"Go back to the fire." Techno turned, and placed a heavy hand on Tommy's shoulder to turn him around.

Tommy resisted, but Techno wasn't the one who had been ill. He was gently pushed back into the living room. The worst place in existence, in Tommy's humble opinion. "Nuh-huh!" Tommy tried to back pedal, but Techno was behind him like an immovable wall.

"Sit down." Techno pushed him again, and Tommy couldn't keep his balance this time and fell onto the couch with an *oomph*.

"You aren't leaving!" Tommy struggled to get up. "You're my prisoner! I'm not letting you."

Techno folded his beefy arms. Wow, when did Techno get so big and threatening? The guy was built like a tank. But Tommy was clearly superior in every way. "Stay here, I will be back in a few minutes."

"No!" Tommy cried out.

"What do you think I'm going to do?" Techno arched an eyebrow. "I can't actually leave."

"I dunno, but you'll do *something*." Tommy wrestled an arm out from the blanket, and pointed an accusing finger at Techno. "You'll send smoke signals to the Empire or some kind of bullshit."

Techno looked amused at this, and gave a mirthful snort. "Smoke signals?"

"Yeah."

"There goes that plan. I better find a pigeon to carry my messages next."

Tommy scowled. When did Technoblade think it was funny to be sarcastic? Only Tommy could be sarcastic. He was the kidnapper here, he got to make the rules. Only- only Tommy could be hilarious.

"Stay here. I will be back, we just need more firewood."

"I don't trust you, you wrongun! You're up to something!" Tommy struggled to his feet, but a large hand pushed him back down onto the couch. Wow, Tommy hadn't realized how lightheaded he was feeling. His vision swayed around a bit. Maybe... he should stay sitting. But only for a second!

There was a *chuff-chuff* and Tommy relaxed slightly. Okay, maybe a bit more than slightly. He sank into the couch cushions and sent a glare up at Techno who looked bemused by this whole situation.

"I never thought you were the kind of kid who trails after people like a baby bird." Techno said, and Tommy froze.

"Ex-fucking-cuse me?" Tommy slowly turned his head to stare daggers at Techno. "What did you just call me?" He asked, dangerously quiet.

"I called you a baby bird." Techno shrugged.

Tommy leapt off the couch with a shriek, the blanket thrown across the ground as Tommy went for the *eyes*.

His head was pounding, and Tommy knew he should probably go to sleep. But he refused to at this point. It was now a part of his pride. Show no weakness! Tommy wrinkled his nose and stared at Techno who sat at the table. "I hate you."

"Uhuh."

"I really really hate you." Tommy said, his nose stuffy and he knew he sounded like a kid, but he couldn't stop himself. The blanket was pulled around him again, and Tommy *allowed* it. Because he could. And that he was a bit cold. It was Tommy's choice, not Technoblades, to have the blanket on. So bleh!

"I heard you the first time." Techno wasn't looking at Tommy, instead he was doing something with a piece of wood.

Tommy shifted uncomfortably in the silence. His head hurt. He needed to sleep. Even his eyes were falling shut against his will. But Tommy was the superior being here! And he will stay away as long as he *wants* to.

But it was boring. Tommy felt his wings rustle behind him as he anxiously glanced around the cabin. He needed... he needed something to help him stay away. His eyes drifted shut for a second before he opened them up wide.

Tommy glanced over at Techno again. He was really focused on that piece of wood. "What are you doing?"

"I thought you said you hated me."

"And I do." Tommy replied, "so tell me what you're doing."

"I'm carving."

Tommy blinked sluggishly, "that's lame. Lame thing. Stupid. What are you carving?"

"I'm not telling you."

Tommy gave Techno a halfhearted glare. "Good, I bet it's shit anyways. Shitty... shitty things. I bet."

Techno glanced up and looked Tommy up and down, "I think you need a nap."

"I do not!" Tommy replied, as offended as he could. He pulled the blanket tighter, and gave Techno his best stink eye. "I am the most healthy big man ever to ever exist and I don't need no-"

"Don't make me come over there." Techno cut off Tommy's incomprehensible rambling.

Tommy narrowed his eyes, "I dare you."

Techno stood up, and Tommy let out a protesting sound. "Wait wait *wait*."

"You dared me." Techno dropped the wood onto the table with a thud, and strode across the room.

"I didn't mean for you to-" Tommy was going to protest further when Techno dropped onto the mattress. He leaned away from Techno, but those big hands reached over and scooped him up. "Get off!"

"Go to sleep." Techno responded, "you're tired and overstimulated."

"Fuck you!" Tommy bit out. "Fuck you, you fucking fucker who ever-"

"That's original."

"Shut up!"

"Go to sleep."

"Make me!"

Techno's grip got a little tighter, and Tommy let out a wheeze. "Fine." Techno replied, and he hoisted Tommy onto his lap. The avian kicked out at the motion, but his legs couldn't reach Techno. Instead Tommy flailed, "let me go!"

"Nah." Techno's voice was so close, and then Tommy could feel it bouncing around in his chest. "I like where I am right now."

Tommy could feel his face starting to get warm. "You- you absolute-" Then Techno's hand wrapped around his mouth and he could only make muffled noises in protest. Then the hand tucked Tommy's face against Techno's shoulder.

"Shh, go to sleep Theseus." Techno said again, and then he made that purring noise again. The deep rhythmic sound was lulling.

Tommy licked the hand. Techno didn't flinch. "Nice try, runt." He said, "but I had to deal with Wilbur while growing up. And he's much worse."

If- if Tommy wasn't already half asleep then this wouldn't have affected him! He was such a big man, and no purring could ever make him pass out. But he was at a disadvantage, and his enemy knew it. Tommy tried to pull away, but his feeble attempts did nothing. Hell, even the bird in his head wasn't protesting against this. And that clearly meant that Tommy was super tired. If the bird didn't recognise Techno as the predator that he was, then it meant that Tommy needed some sleep.

Hey- who was he calling runt?

Tommy let out a disgruntled noise, but Techno just held him firmly.

Bitch.

"Your wings are a mess." Techno broke the quiet one day. The axe was in his hands as he sharpened a stick. He had taken to carving things from the wood piles, and then throwing whatever masterpiece he had crafted into the fire.

"Shut up!" Tommy snapped back, his feathers puffing up in anger. "They're perfectly fine."

"Right." Techno pointed at his left wing, "wanna tell me why the feathers look like they're knotted together?"

Tommy glanced and yeah, some of his feathers did look pretty bad, but they were fine. They were always fine. Tommy could still fly if he wanted to. No biggy. "Looks fine to me." Tommy spat out like an angry cat.

"Just because you don't have a flock-"

"I have a flock!" Tommy shouted, and then grew quiet, "she's just busy."

“Busy? Too busy to preen your wings?” Techno responded.

“Yeah. She’s just- I don’t want to bother her all the time, got it? I have a flock. I’m just trapped in a stupid cabin with some weirdo until the end of time.” Tommy crosses his arms, his wings curling around him. “I don’t preen a lot anyways.”

Techno gave him that raised eyebrow that spoke volumes, and Tommy hissed. “Leave it alone.”

“Fine.”

“Good.”

“Just so you know, if you ever need help-”

“I will willingly throw myself onto the Blood God’s sword before I ever let you touch my wings again.” Tommy snapped back.

Techno looked vaguely amused by that statement. “Noted.”

Tommy was laying on the bed, the blanket wrapped around him when he woke up in the middle of the night. He had been dreaming of that place again, of hedges and of black fountains, when his body prodded him to wake up. The first thing he noticed was how cold things were. He let out a shaking hissing breath, as he peered across the dark cabin. The fireplace had burned low, until only coals pulsed with a red light.

Normally that wouldn’t be a bad thing, but Tommy noticed that the firewood was all gone. There wasn’t a spare log available for him to throw on. With a few mumbled curses, Tommy rose from the bed. There were some logs outside. But it would freeze Tommy’s ass off in the three seconds it would take for him to grab some.

He debated whether or not he should just wait until morning, but he could already feel the ice begin to creep under the blanket. He should just get the wood. But that would result in going outside. And that sucked during the night time. But on the other hand, he would be cold all night, with a chance of very little sleep.

With a suffering sigh, Tommy sat up. His wings rustled behind him, and Tommy clung to the blanket as he stood up. Where were his shoes? Tommy stumbled a bit before he found them.

“What are you doing?”

Tommy jumped in shock, his head whipping around to see Techno blinking up at him from the couch. A rain of curses falling from his lips. Once his heart calmed down from it’s sudden rebellion, Tommy responded, “gotta get more firewood, dickface. We ran out.”

Techno didn’t even look phased in the cold. Weren’t nether hybrids supposed to get cold easier? It didn’t affect Techno as much, Tommy had noticed that Techno never shivered. Was

that a piglin thing?

A hand wrapped around Tommy's wrist. And Tommy let out a squawk as he was pulled down onto Techno. Tommy's protests weren't listened to, and he was silenced as Tommy's face was smashed up against Techno's chest.

"It's too late to go out." Techno murmured, "just stay."

Tommy would protest- he *would*. But Techno was *warm*. Like, 'a hot bath' kind of warm. If Tommy didn't know any better, he might have thought that Techno had a fever. The guy was a literal heater. And Tommy really, *really* didn't want to go outside in sub-zero temperatures. Not to mention he'd also have to start the fire again, and he was never good at doing that.

Slowly Tommy's stiff figure softened, melting in Techno's embrace. The bird inside his head hummed appreciatively, and Tommy didn't have the energy to shush it. It continued to warble until the morning light slipped through the windows. It stopped when Techno rose, leaving Tommy bundled on the couch.

Later, when the fire was stoked and Tommy was running his fingers through his bed-head, he hissed, "*shut up*." And the bird gave him a beady little look like it was Tommy's fault. It wasn't! Tommy was just a man, and sometimes it's only human to succumb to sleep.

Do you mean cuddles? The bird chirped out, and Tommy let out an angry choked noise before he gave the bird a mental middle finger. "*Shut up!*"

Techno didn't broach the subject of... the impromptu nap they took. And Tommy was too manly about it to say anything either. Both of them acted like *nothing* happened, which was fine. The less they spoke about their *feelings* the better this whole thing will be.

Two days later, Tommy woke up in the middle of the night freezing his ass off again. Somehow the firewood, which he was *certain* he had brought in that night, wasn't enough. It was all gone. Sleepily Tommy got up to get more, but a hand caught his wrist again and pulled him into an embrace. Tommy only muttered out his protests, but they were half hearted at best. The final nail in the metaphorical coffin was the gentle vibration of Techno's rumble as they curled onto the couch.

Which was... okay. He guessed. It was *okay*.

A month passed. And Tommy was about dead. There wasn't anything to *do*. Techno was content doing whatever idle tasks he set for himself. And Tommy was dying. The cards were boring. They got old and fast, even when Techno actually taught him how to play solitaire. Tommy started to stack the cards up in a tower, and Techno was carving to pass the time.

Tommy was halfway through the deck, the tower leaning a bit to the side when a stray gust of air knocked it all to the ground. Tommy groaned, tossing the ace of spades and the jack of hearts onto the pile from his hands.

“Here.” Techno was leaning in, holding his hand out.

Tommy stared for a second, “this feels like a trap.”

“It isn’t. Just take it.” Techno nudged his hand out a bit further.

Tommy held his hand underneath Techno’s, and he dropped a piece of wood into it. For a second- it just looked like a lump of wood. But as Tommy turned it over in his hands- he realized it was an animal. A *cow*. To be precise. It was a bit rough, some of the proportions were wrong- but it was undeniably a cow.

How- when had Tommy told Techno his favorite animal? Probably on one of the long-ass rants Tommy did to fill the silence.

And Techno had remembered it?

Tommy’s mouth was a bit dry, and he blinked a few times. “It’s poggers.” He said, curling his fingers around it possessively. “Thanks.” He averted his eyes.

“For what it’s worth, I’m sorry.” Techno said, “for throwing your bracelet into the fire. I know it isn’t the same, but I’m sorry for making you upset.”

Tommy let his hair flop onto his face. Hiding his eyes. He really needed to cut it here soon- it was getting a bit too shaggy for his taste. But at the moment it worked nicely to obscure his emotions. “I don’t forgive you.” Tommy said, at last. “But I like the cow. I think I’ll call her.... Ricola.”

“Ricola?”

“Yes, I think it suits her just fine. A great name for a pretty lady.” Tommy patted the cow on the head. He sets her next to him as he picks up the pile of cards, and begins to stack them up again.

He ignored the bird cooing at the small figurine, and the sudden increase in his heart rate.

The third month seemed to be an eternity. But it was gone like a snap.

Tommy had a new purpose. Something to *do*, for once. He crafted a shitty wooden shovel which broke constantly and he was trying to dig the cabin out of the snow. Bit by bit. The snow fell from the sky and stayed for days. And then the clouds would linger for a little while before leaving for a week. It was thrilling. To move *snow*.

Primes, Tommy was losing his mind.

Techno went out every day with the axe, taking a path that Tommy had carved out to a grove of trees. Tommy could see a pine tree shaking with each heavy strike against it. Then Techno would drag the tree back before cutting it up and stacking it in the dry space on the back porch.

It was becoming a habit. The two of them could stay outside for an hour or two before the chill would start to linger in their bones. But it was good to get out even for a minute. Tommy shoveled the snow away and created pathways so they could travel around in the forest around them. Techno taking his aggression out on the trees and whatever wildlife he stumbled across.

The first time Tommy saw Techno walk in with a rabbit in his hands, his mouth began to salivate uncontrollably.

He was an avian, and a small part of him still hungered for blood. And no, he wasn't a vegetarian. That was propaganda to make songbird avians cute. And he is a bloodthirsty monster!

He had fangs too! To prove it! They were.. A bit small. Okay, so his incisors were barely bigger than a normal person's, but they were fangs nonetheless. And that meant he ate *meat*.

That night they roasted the rabbit over the fire and Tommy had never been more excited to sink his teeth into it. *Provider*, cooed the bird.

Halfway through the third month something new happened. Tommy leaned into the pantry, looking over the cans. "Lets see here, we have a few cans of cream of mushroom soup. A beef stew that tastes like ass. And beans. All of the beans."

Techno hummed thoughtfully, "mushrooms sound nice."

"Mushrooms it is then," Tommy reached in and snatched at the can. His fingers fumbled with the can and it slipped from his fingers. Landing on the floor in the pantry with a dull thunk.

Wait just a second.

Thunk?

Tommy stared at the ground with narrowed eyes. That sounded awfully... hollow. He knelt down and tapped at the ground.

"What are you doing?" Techno poked his head into the kitchen.

"I think..." Tommy could feel his heart rate suddenly spiking. This was the *most exciting thing to ever happen ever in the history of the world*. "I think there is something underneath the floor?"

That piqued Techno's interest. And the piglin hybrid walked into the kitchen as Tommy thumped at the floor. Sure enough, it didn't sound solid. Like there was an empty space under it. Tommy pulled everything out of the way, the buckets of random food storage, until the floor was empty.

"Get the axe," Tommy said, and *wow* he got a surge of an adrenaline rush. He had missed this. Entertainment. His fingers trailed along the floor but he couldn't find any handholds to pry it up. Techno disappeared from his side, returning in a moment with the axe in hand.

"Have at it," Tommy scooted away, and Techno gave a heave. The axe fell with a slam, and almost instantly the floor buckled and splintered away.

The bird poked his head up from Tommy's brain. *Strong. Good for the nest.*

"Shut up." Tommy hissed, and then ignored Techno's signature eyebrow raise. "It's nothing."

The two peered into the darkness below, and there was a *staircase*.

"If this is the part where I get murdered by ghosts," Tommy said, "tell my many wives I love them and that I forgot to put them in my will."

Techno snorted, "am I in your will?"

"Oh yes," Tommy replied, "to General Technoblade, I give you all of the fucks I couldn't give before. May you use them wisely."

"I will cherish them." Technoblade said, before taking a step down onto the staircase. Tommy could feel the cold chill rising from the darkness. He shivered, but followed Techno.

The room was strange. It was lined with cobblestone, which was *pog*, but it clearly hadn't been touched in decades. Tommy recoiled from the thick spider webs that covered the ceiling. Glowstone was set in the walls, creating a dim light. There were boxes covered in dust, and a desk in the middle of the room. There was a map open, and Tommy paused to stare at it while Techno looked at the boxes.

"I think... This was a bunker or something." Tommy touched the map that was shown only in history books. "This is the Empire before, well, the Syndicate took over."

"I thought we got rid of these a long time ago." Techno muttered, "but it isn't surprising. The rebellion at the beginning was like rats. Hiding and creating new holes everywhere. Statistically, we would have missed one."

Tommy paused and gave Techno a curious look. "You fought against the rebellion?"

"I am the general, Theseus." Techno responded.

"But like, how old are you? I thought maybe you're like, twenty five. But if you fought the rebellion then you have to be older than that." Tommy responded, "people say that the rebellion was officially wiped out three years after the Syndicate took over, like, twenty years ago."

Techno hummed, “there is always a rebellion happening in the Empire. It’s too big for there not to be one. Yes, the biggest one was when the Syndicate took over. The original citizens didn’t take too kindly to the takeover. They teach their kids to hate us, even though we have a prosperous society.” He opened a crate with his bare hands, and the bird cooed again at the raw strength it took to do that. Techno started to dig into the contents.

“You didn’t answer my question.” Tommy said, leaning up against the table. Even though his fingers itched to also look through the new treasures. “How old *are* you?”

Techno’s hands stilled, and the piglin hybrid looked up and gave Tommy a *look*. “Haven’t your many wives told you it’s rude to ask a hybrid their age?”

“Nope.”

“It’s rude.”

“Don’t care.”

“I do.”

“And?” Tommy kicked his legs out, “so tell me?”

“No.”

Tommy pursed his lips, then shrugged, “whatever. What’s in there?”

Techno pulled out a crossbow, and smiled. “What do you think about deer for dinner?”

The hidden bunker underneath the cabin held a lot of things. Nothing really caught Tommy’s eyes- no jewels or gleaming rocks. Fuck, there wasn’t any money either. Not that there would be a use for money out here in the middle of nowhere. But it was the principle of the thing. There is a reason why Tommy had tons of cash- he simply liked having it.

The good thing is: is that there is bedding. New blankets, although musty and dusty with age. Along with clothes that were a bit out of date, and yet they were clean and without the wear and tear of their shabby clothing. A few pillows, here or there. Techno found a few books, but they weren’t in English much to Tommy’s dismay.

Oh, and the stockpile of weapons.

Lots, and lots of weapons.

Honestly, there weren’t a lot of things that they could use them for out in the woods. Tommy wasn’t a violent kind of person either- so he left Techno to look through them all while he pulled out the bedding.

One second, Tommy pulled out a thick blanket in the bunker- the next he was puffing a pillow up and placing it in a perfect position on the mattress. Tommy blinked a few times, before abruptly coming to his senses. The bare mattress had been piled high with all the bedding Tommy had presumably pulled out from the bunker.

The sun had changed positions, and Tommy suddenly felt exhausted. The bird warbled with satisfaction at the mediocre nest they were able to make. He glanced around and saw Techno on the couch, a book in one hand and wearing new clothes.

“Finally out of it?” Techno glanced up and caught Tommy’s eye.

Tommy slumped back into the nest and gave a great sigh. “You didn’t see anything.”

“So why did the Empire close it’s borders anyways?” Tommy asked one night midway through the third month.

“Don’t you learn this in school?” Techno responded, raising an eyebrow.

Tommy gave him a deadpan look, “oh yes, let me recite how the Syndicate destroyed an innocent prosperous country on a whim and killed and set everything on fire because they’re villains. Somehow I don’t think my history class was very accurate.”

Techno inclined his head slightly, “there were a lot of fires and murders, I have to admit that.”

“Shut up.”

“You are the one who asked-”

“Tell me the truth.” Tommy groaned loudly, “I’m so bored.”

Techno gave a great sigh, “there were two reasons why the Syndicate closed the borders. The first was because every superhero in the world was gunning after us. They were the ones who caused a lot of the damage to the cities. After a while, when the heroes didn’t stop coming, we figured they were trying to wreck the Empire on purpose. So we closed the borders. We had to build things back up, stabilize the economy, all that boring stuff.”

Tommy nodded, “yeah that sounds right. What’s the second reason?”

Techno paused, and then gave Tommy a wry look. “The Blood God wanted to say, ‘hippity hoppity, get off of my property.’”

“Aren’t you supposed to be good at singing?” Techno asked one day. Tommy was doing a big man thing, cleaning the dishes. And he had been absentmindedly humming a tune he heard a

while ago.

Tommy gave an angry splutter, “excuse me, dickhead?”

Techno didn’t blink at the insult. “You heard me. Aren’t songbird avians supposed to be, you know, good at singing? It’s in the name. Kinda cringe that you aren’t.”

“That is just- that is just hybrid-ist! That’s like asking if piglins eat purple mushrooms or- or they’re always a ugly bitch! I bet they don’t get any women.” Tommy shot back.

“That doesn’t make any sense.”

“Your face doesn’t make sense!”

“Okay, okay. I was just asking-”

“I’ll show *you* singing!” Tommy sucked in a deep breath before tilting his head back and screeching, “*CASTAWAYS. WE ARE CASTAWAYS.*”

“Oh my Prime, stop!”

“Never! *AHOY THERE-*”

Techno lunged and Tommy screamed.

The fourth month had a change of weather. It didn’t just snow all the time, but now the sun began to peer out of the clouds. Tommy couldn’t help it, he would stay outside as much as he could bathing in the sunlight. Spreading his wings out until they ached as he soaked in the sunshine.

Techno would join him. Sitting outside with one of the three books they found in the bunker below the house. Sometimes he would read it outloud. It was in *French* so Tommy had no idea what was being said, but Techno would translate it. It was some old novel that some white man wrote. Charles Dickens.

It was April? Maybe May? Snow still covered the trees and land around them. But it’ll melt eventually. The once icy-hard wall of white was now becoming slushy and grainy. It made Tommy hope that maybe, in a week or something, he could leave. Right?

The next day it snowed and they gained an extra two feet around the cabin. Tommy wanted to scream. In fact, he was certain that his left eye was twitching from the rage at the sight of the blizzard.

Techno, the fucker, was calm like he had been expecting it. “It’s the second winter. It’ll get warm before a big storm hits in the spring.”

Tommy kicked at a wall, hissing.

There is a moment in Tommy's life when the little bird in his head tends to make bad decisions. Tommy can and will blame this bird for anything and everything. It saw a shiny nice watch in a store window, forcing Tommy to break in and take it. One time it screeched that it wanted to eat something and he had to go buy some sunflower seeds to appease the sudden craving.

Tommy's downfall was a bath.

He was outside, hauling wood and shoveling snow around. Techno walked in the cabin earlier, leaving Tommy to do all the dirty work. Well, not really. Techno had split the wood all morning. But Tommy is the one who's moving it all around, freezing his wings off.

Finally, when the cold was just too much and it started to burn instead of numb, Tommy walked inside. The cabin was warm, and the air blasted at the snowflakes sticking to Tommy's shaggy hair. It was getting long now, getting in the way of his eyes.

Techno was bent over the fire, a pot hanging over the chain. "What are you making?" Tommy said in lieu of a greeting.

"Just boiling some water." Techno replied.

"Why?"

Techno reached in with his bare hands and unhooked the pot from the chain. Tommy would have been burned if he did that, but piglin hybrids didn't have the same issue. Fireproof, and all that jazz. "You stink."

"I- you what?" Tommy spluttered from the remark.

"Hate to break it to you, Theseus, but you smell. Very badly." Techno hauled the pot into the bathroom. Tommy could hear it being poured, and then Techno was in the doorway. "So go take a bath."

"A bath?" Tommy replied faintly, but his thoughts were elsewhere.

"Yes, a bath. Now go get in before I decide I want to take mine first." Techno waved a hand at the door as he went to refill the pot with water.

Tommy stood frozen in the cabin, snow slowly melting down his pants and shoes. Completely at a loss for words. Because for once, the bird and him agreed on something.

Techno would make a very good flock.

Okay, he was- he was nice. Techno is very nice. He listens and he tells good stories. He doesn't get offended when Tommy insults the daylights out of him. Not to mention the qualities that make the bird croon inside his head.

Good protector. Provider. Good for the nest. Good for flock.

“Theseus.” Techno was in the room again, “get in the water before it gets cold.”

“Right.” Tommy’s voice cracked. “Uh yeah. I’m just- I’m just going to go do that. Yep. Bye.” And he threw himself into the bathroom and closed the door and leaned against it. He slid down the wood, and held his face in his hands.

Tommy took in a deep breath before whispering to himself, “pull yourself together, man. Just- just ignore it. It’ll go away.”

The bath, admittedly, was so fucking nice. The bird kept crooning in Tommy’s head. And he hated that he agreed with every statement. The warm water soaked into his hollow bones, and Tommy held his head in his hands the entire time. Alternating between morbid embarrassment and conflicting want.

He stayed in the water until it was murky brown, and yeah, he really had needed a bath. He got as much muck off of him before pulling himself out of the water. By the time he left the bathroom, Tommy was firm in his decision to just ignore the new development. If he just avoided it entirely, then nothing will happen.

That plan went out the door instantly.

Tommy’s eyes caught Techno leaning over, his long pink hair spilling over his shoulders as he grabbed something and that bird, *that damned bird*, made Tommy’s heart stop. A sudden crushing desire to see that pink hair in Tommy’s nest was overwhelming. The red blankets that felt like silk that decorated his nest would look *so good* with Techno laying on top of them, his hair splayed out.

His mouth opened with shock, and Tommy swallowed hard.

And that officially began the crisis. Because Tommy couldn't ignore it or drown it in denial.

Because that bird saw something in Techno, and it *wanted*. Tommy couldn’t fathom it. When did this happen? When did Tommy look at Techno with something other than wariness? Tommy was a songbird, so when did he decide that Technoblade, a predator, was harmless against him?

(It was probably the moment when Tommy let his guard down. When he looked at Techno and saw a friend rather than an enemy. Maybe during the long nights, when Tommy talked and talked the whole night away, the stars glinting outside the windows, as Techno listened intently. It could have happened when Tommy began to trust Techno, prodding him with jokes and interesting facts he had learned on the internet and Techno never acted like Tommy was a nuisance. Or maybe it was when Techno dragged Tommy into his arms every other night, purring as he rubbed Tommy’s back as they slept.

But how did it get this far without Tommy noticing?)

Tommy stood there, staring at Techno until the man met his gaze. “Take a picture, it’ll last longer.” Techno said, before going back to his carving.

Tommy fled into the kitchen. His heart racing, he turned on the sink and splashed the cold as fuck water onto his face. Trying to clear his thoughts. But it was unsuccessful. The bird was pushing at him now, screeching from it’s nest as it brought up how the rubies that Tommy had stolen in Persia would match Techno’s eyes. The pearls that Tommy had would compliment Techno’s skin. The nest would need to expand for the new member of the flock to rest comfortably in it.

Fuck.

Tommy looked at Techno and *wanted him to be his family*.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy trembling and shaking: how did I catch feelings?

Techno casually sliding plans under the couch: I dunno

The song Tommy sang was Castaways from the TV show Backyardians. That show was my childhood. Its now a meme.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Things haven't been the greatest. Wilbur could admit it- his therapist told him that he should be honest about when he had his ups and downs. And it was pretty easy to say that the last few months have been a burning screaming mess aimed directly into the ground and bursting out the other side to hit hell.

Techno's lack of presence was the main cause of things. Wilbur had been expecting his brother to return after a few weeks, to get his hibernation out of the way and to slaughter everybody who had taken him. Instead, the days dragged on and the longer Techno was gone, the worse off both of them became. Phil was, on his worst days, clingy. Always popping his bird face into the room to check what was going on, eyeing everything up from a distance with that mother-hen look. Now Wilbur couldn't leave the room without explaining what he was doing, and exactly how long he will be gone for. Otherwise, Phil would panic and hunt him down, and he wouldn't let Wilbur out of his sight.

To be fair, Phil wasn't the only one doing it too. Wilbur was naturally clingy, finding affection with physical touch. If Phil wasn't within arm reach whenever Wilbur's piglin brain randomly called out for it- Wilbur would practically jump his father and hold him in a grip that he couldn't let go for hours.

It wasn't exactly the healthiest relationship either of them had. More often, Wilbur needed space. His wanderlust would bubble up- and Phil would always be hovering causing Wilbur to snap. Phil had to keep busy, always running the Empire or other affairs, and when Wilbur would force him to cuddle it made Phil anxious and worried- causing Wilbur to stress as well, and the cycle would loop.

Honestly, Wilbur was going to find whoever took his brother, and keep them *alive*. He wouldn't kill them. Oh no, he would sing them into his woven lies, make them puppets dancing to his rhythm, and force them to kill their own families and friends. Wouldn't that be the perfect ending? Steal Technoblade away from him, and Wilbur would take all of their loved ones and make the kidnappers grab the nearest rock and bash their heads in?

Half of Wilbur wanted bloodshed. The other half wanted to kill Technoblade himself. Not that Wilbur would actually commit fratricide. Maybe maim his brother just a bit. Because- there is no good reason why Technoblade hadn't just waltzed on into the castle asking for a shitty baked potato yet.

Wilbur knew his brother like the back of his hand. Hell, even Pandora's Vault couldn't hold Technoblade- he had broken out of it four years prior. So as the days went on, the chance that Techno was *choosing* to stay away from home was getting higher.

There was another option- one that Phil and Wilbur both avoided talking about. That Techno was dead. And that the reason why he wasn't back was because he couldn't come back. But

the idea of that was unfathomable. They were *immortal*. There were things that could hurt them, make them bleed, yes. But to kill them? Impossible.

Kristin brought some sense of relief, as she let Phil know that Technoblade was alive, healthy, and still within the confines of the Empire. The relief made Phil sink into the ground, his wings slumping onto the floor to gather dust. Wilbur would do the same, but he felt the burning rage build up within him after a few seconds.

If Techno was healthy and fine and whatever- then why the fuck wasn't he home yet?

The anger made Wilbur's knuckles turn white as he held a fork. Staring down at his breakfast with animosity.

"Did your eggs insult you?" Phil asked, amused, breaking the quiet.

"Yes, they told me your hair is turning gray, old man." Wilbur shot back, but his glare softened and he scooped up another bite.

"Thank you for defending my honor."

"I'm not defending something you don't have," Wilbur said with a mouthful of food. And Phil pointed his own fork at him.

"You lil shit."

"I'm not little, I'm taller than you-"

The door suddenly opened, and suddenly the strained, but happy, atmosphere vanished. Wilbur sat up straighter, and Phil adopted a cold look. A nameless guard, one of many, nervously stood at the entrance.

"I thought we made it clear we were not to be disturbed," Philza said, setting the fork down with a slight click. The guard flinched from the noise. "What is it?"

"I'm sorry to interrupt, your majesty." The guard said, "but we were doing our bi-yearly check of the Vault. There are a few things that are gone. We can't find them."

"And what," Phil's eyes narrowed as he stood up slowly, "exactly is missing?"

Tommy hadn't realized how comfortable he had been around Techno until he took a step back. He supposed months of being locked up in the same house did that to you. He had to stop himself from sitting next to Techno on the couch, or curling his wings around the two of them when it got cold during the night.

Hell, when had Tommy started to sleep around Techno in the first place? The memory of Techno tucking him into his embrace was faint but there, and Tommy had just accepted it. That was when the firewood was running low.

Shit.

His heart was racing. The bird in him poked it's head out and gave him a curious chirp, unable to find anything that would set Tommy off. There wasn't a predator around.

There wasn't a *predator around*.

Techno didn't register as a threat to Tommy anymore.

Fuck.

Tommy had... Tommy had been treating Techno like flock for a while now. Looking back at it now he could see that he had been worrying over Technoblade like a hen over it's chick. 'Take your boots off when you get inside, Techno.' 'Don't you dare go outside without your jacket, Tech.' 'Are you hungry, can I make something?'

Tommy had been courting him. For months now. And he *only just realized it*.

"What's wrong?" Techno broke the silence, staring down at Tommy.

Tommy, who had been sitting quietly and fidgeting, his wings were rustling behind him. "Uh! Nothing! Nothing is wrong. Super cool. Life is great. Ten out of ten. You know." Tommy spoke too quickly and loudly for comfort.

"Uhuh." Techno stood up, "what's wrong?"

"I just told you, big guy, absolutely nothing." Tommy gave out a nervous laugh. "Did you see that uh, deer earlier? Maybe you should go out hunting tomorrow. Stretch your legs, you know?" And he vanished to go hide in the bathroom.

As much as Tommy could deny it all day long- there is no going back.

He wanted Techno.

So he was going to get him.

For about an hour, Tommy schemed. A proper kind of scheming, where he thought dastardly thoughts and crimes that he could commit. The bird was rooting for him every step of the way, letting out chirps of approval as Tommy planned. Because- because Tommy *wanted* and what he wanted, he got.

Technically, Tommy already *had* Technoblade. He was trapped in this nice little cabin with Tommy- but the avian craved *more*. He wanted Technoblade in his nest, to live with him, to *be his flock*.

So- how does one make a piglin hybrid imprint on oneself?

Fire was good to stare at when Tommy is trying to think difficult things. For once, the silence of the room wasn't oppressive. It was relaxed, and it was broken up by the familiar sound of the knife cutting away at wood. Techno was making another figurine of some kind. And Tommy was content just sitting and watching the fire burn as he mentally made a list.

The list was called, *How to Woo Technoblade Into My Flock*.

The first bullet point was - *I am a big man*.

That was it.

He could recall how Techno was obsessed over his wings. And Tommy was a bit hesitant about using them against Techno, but what was that saying again? All things fair in love and war? Whatever it is, Tommy had to use every weapon. The bird in him preened at the very idea of luring Techno into their nest. And Tommy couldn't disagree with it.

He should- lure him in with gold! Yes! But Tommy didn't have gold.

Tommy studied his wings a bit, they were... not very good looking. Years of neglect and being under an enchantment would do that- but Tommy hadn't really fallen into the whole 'preening' business before. Techno wasn't a fan of them- not since he woke up from his instincts. It was obvious *to anybody* that they were brass, maybe if they squinted it looked like fools gold. Not like the real precious metal that piglins hoarded.

Maybe... Tommy could buffer them a bit? Shine them up? No no, hold them near the fireplace! The firelight made them more yellow-ish! Clearly that is the best option.

Okay, so Tommy had a way to lure Techno in. Now what? What did piglin hybrids eat? Well, food obviously. The best way to trick a man into his nest is by his stomach! Moreover, what is Techno's favorite food?

Well, even if Tommy knew, there wasn't a way for him to get it. All they had was a wall of canned foods and whatever game Techno could hunt down. Shit. So that plan wouldn't work. Back to the drawing board!

Thus: *How to Woo Technoblade Into My Flock* was given another bullet point. - *Flex the wings*.

Tommy was subtle. He was a master at his work, a thief at night, Tommy could be sneaky if he wanted to be. And so one morning, Tommy would stretch up and *yawn*, and *oops* his wings accidentally hit Techno in the face. Whoops.

Techno didn't seem to care- but Tommy was *watching*. Like a bird of prey, he saw how Techno's eyes were slightly dilated afterwards. Hell yeah! He was getting somewhere. Of course, this wasn't the whole plan, Tommy couldn't just flash his wings around and sing pretty to lure in Technoblade like his bird counterparts could. That was *too* obvious. He had to be sneaky. Keep it on the down low.

Instead Tommy just started to leave... little gifts. His feathers were starting to molt, and all he had to do was just shake them a bit and a wave of feathers would fall to the ground. It wasn't as nice as preening was, but it was enough to make the specially irritating feathers get out of his hair. Tommy had a handful and he would just casually leave one around. Under the couch, on the floor, near the fireplace- random locations. But Tommy noted that after a few hours they would be gone. And Techno's pocket was a little bit bigger.

Techno acted like normal- and Tommy was halfway split between relieved and disappointed. He wanted Techno to acknowledge his courting- but that would require... actually *talking* with him. Tommy only had one flock before, and he never had to woo her. It was the first time for everything!

But still, Techno didn't act like anything was happening and it made the bird in Tommy's head screech in agony that Techno didn't like them.

The next morning, Tommy went out walking into the woods. When he returned, he had found some lovely rocks in a stream. They were polished after years of water running over them, and some of them had pretty sparkles in them. With great ceremony, Tommy handed one over to Techno as a gift.

"What is this for?" Techno picked it up, and Tommy couldn't help but watch intently.

"It's a cool rock. And I thought it reminded me of you." Tommy replied a bit stiffly. Shit, he did not want to face the reaction of the bird inside of him if Techno rejected it. Hell, even his nerves were on fire. "It has pink specks in it."

Techno eyed the rock up and down, and set it onto the table. Tommy's heart lurched. But Techno said, "I like it. Thanks."

Fuck! Yeah!

Tommy could feel his wings perk up, he honestly couldn't help it. "Cool." Tommy said as neutral as he could, "I'm going to go wash some dishes." And he skedaddled out of the room to do a celebratory dance.

If Tommy wasn't trapped in the Empire, and had full access to his things, he would have already taken Techno away to his nest. The bird in him kept cawing for it. But Techno warranted more than just a silly little rock with pink specks in it. He needed- he *deserved* real gems.

That bird was pushing Tommy. Edging him on. *Brag*. It says, *tell him about how cool you are*.

Tommy resisted but he was also running out of ideas. So as casual as he could, he started a conversation in the hopes that it would lead in the right direction. He is the ultimate super sneaky big man. And he couldn't just- you know, *tell* Technoblade straight up what he did for a living.

"So, who's your favorite hero?" Tommy was picking at a loose thread on his shirt.

Techno snorted, "what brought this on?"

"You know?" Tommy rolled his eyes, "it's the most common question asked, like, ever. I know when I was in kindergarten or whatever that was the first question we asked." And

Tommy had almost thrown hands with a girl with pigtails when she said she liked *Herobrine* of all people.

Techno gave a thoughtful hum, “I don’t think I have a favorite hero, to be honest.”

“What? I don’t believe you. Everybody has a hero they like.” And then Tommy caught Techno’s look. “What?”

“I live in the Empire, Theseus.” Techno replied dryly, “there aren’t heroes here. And when they were around, they just wrecked everything.”

Tommy wilted, “that makes sense. Well, I’ll tell you my favorite. It’s Dream.”

Techno looked pained, “Dream?”

“Green guy, wears a mask, has a sense of humor?” Tommy gestured to his face, “easily throwable?”

“I know who Dream is. Although I didn’t know he had a sense of humor.” Techno replied.

Tommy nodded, “yeah. There was this one time where I was- I mean, uh, I saw on *television*, yeah TV, that Dream was chasing this epic super cool bad guy around. And Dream followed him into this vape shop and this really high girl just latched onto him and started crying uncontrollably. And he just was *so confused* and why this was happening. You could see his ears get so red.” Tommy laughed softly, “and then Dream just asked, like a total buffoon, ‘excuse me ma’am, what is your problem? Can’t you see I’m in the middle of something, or can you not see through the vape smoke?’ And this girl straight up slaps him. It was hilarious.”

Techno laughed. The bird in Tommy trilled.

“So, then. I guess I should ask the opposite question,” Tommy said slyly, “who is your favorite super *villain*?”

“Probably the Blood God.” Techno replied wryly.

“Makes sense. I mean, there are only five you can choose from anyways.” Tommy counted them on his fingers, “Angel of Death, Siren, Blood God, Ender, and Nemesis. It’s part of your ‘I’m an evil general’ contract you had to sign, I’m sure.”

“I do like Nemesis. But Siren is super cringe.” Techno said.

“Isn’t Siren, like, your boss?” Tommy asked.

Techno waved a hand in a ‘so-so’ movement. “I only answer to the Emperor, really.”

“Huh.” Tommy grew quiet again, thinking about it. Technoblade must be important if he answered only to the Angel of Death.

“Well, who is your favorite supervillain?” Techno asked.

Tommy gave a hum, “probably Jester. He’s a fun guy to be around. I like what he’s done with Las Nevadas.”

“Jester?” Techno looked offended, “he’s a knock-off version of the Syndicate.”

“Ehh,” Tommy shrugged, “I mean, I guess so. He did take over his own country, but Las Nevadas is really neat. Take it from me, it’s great. The capitol building has a *slide* in it. An actual slide. Does the Syndicate’s castle have a slide?”

“No-”

“And that’s why Jester is better.” Tommy nodded, “clearly he is a superior choice.” Then Tommy caught the look on Techno’s face. “Why do you look like I just killed your cat?”

“Las Nevadas is *not* a country, don’t even compare the two. It’s a floating island that travels around and cheats people out of their money.”

“Yes, a floating island casino. Who doesn’t want to visit a *floating island casino*. Syndicate took over some boring old country, no biggy. Any supervillain can do that. Jester has *style*.” Tommy rebuked, and Techno had this pinched expression on his face.

“Do you know how much politics is involved in taking over a country- how much work it is? Jester just stole an island off the coast of Mexico and made it a tourist attraction.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt it. Kinda weirdchamp that people *want* to take over the world- it’s pretty sucky if you ask me.” Tommy shot back.

“I know.” Techno replied wearily, “oh, I know.”

“Speaking of crimes, you know,” Tommy casually brought up, “I’m kind of an expert. Of things.”

Techno hummed, and that meant he was listening.

Tommy’s heart pounded. His palms were sticky. He’s actually... never *told* anybody about this before. “Yeah, I’m considered the best in my field, I’ll have you know. Lots of women love me because I’m so great.”

“Uhuh.”

How does one confess to one's abductee that one is a master at thieving? Tommy really didn’t know. So he decided not to beat around the bush and be blunt about it. “I’m considered one of the *greatest* thieves in the entire world, I’ll have you know.”

Techno’s knife paused, and Tommy oh so casually glanced over at Techno and then back to the wall. The wall was very interesting. The detail on it- simply stunning. “A thief?”

“Yup. I can steal *anything*.”

“Anything?” Techno snorted.

“Absolutely.” Tommy nodded, “I’ve stolen so much stuff, and I’ve never been caught once. I’ve never been to prison.” The times he allowed himself to get caught was on his terms, and only with the Dream Team. They were just too much fun to mess around with.

“Kinda cringe that you botched this mess up, then.” Techno replied, waving his knife to gesture around the cabin. “I bet we weren’t supposed to end up here.” And he went back to carving up the piece of wood in his hands.

“Well... I mean. Yeah.” Tommy shifted nervously, “originally the contract was just to keep you for a few days. I *was* just going to drug you up, but then things went a bit sideways. Overall, I would say staying alive and evading capture is probably a positive thing. If you just overlook the whole ‘we got snowed in and can’t leave for a few months.’ I think the worst bit is the canned food, I don’t think I can ever eat that shit ever again.”

Techno’s movements halted as Tommy rambled on. “Contract?” Techno asked casually, but Tommy knew that he had the full attention of the piglin hybrid now.

Tommy hummed, “yeah. Somebody paid me to work this job. I normally don’t just take randos off the street.”

“How much was I worth?” Techno asked.

“Two dollars.” Tommy shot back. And at Techno’s offended gaze, he gave in, “okay it was a nether star.”

Techno’s eyebrows shot up, “a star?”

“Yeah. Otherwise I would have never touched this job with a nine and a half foot pole.” Tommy replied, “sneaking into the Empire, stealing a general with little to no information about you on the internet, and not to mention- I’m literally kidnapping a human... Those are risks I normally don’t take. But it wasn’t boring, I’ll tell you that much.”

“Prime forbid it from being boring.” Techno replied wryly. But he had this intense look on his face.

“Exactly. I’m so glad you understand me.” Tommy sighed with relief. He was almost shaking. It was like that moment after a rollercoaster, still buzzing with endorphins. Tommy had done it. He looked over at Techno, trying to gauge what he was thinking. Was he mad? Did he approve of it? But Tommy couldn’t get a read on him.

“What are you thinking?”

Techno made eye contact. “I can’t believe I was worth a *nether star*. Surely, I’m worth more than that.”

Tommy laughed, and all of his fears faded away.

The slush of the snow soaked into Tommy’s sneakers, but he didn’t care as he walked in circles. He was running out of time. He had to make Techno *like* him. The bird was getting

more and more annoyed the longer that Tommy waited. But Tommy couldn't just yoink Techno out of the Empire, that would be a bit more difficult than walking in was. Although... it wouldn't be impossible. Tommy could do anything, and taking Techno back to his nest would be hard but it could happen.

He gnawed on his fingers, trying to think of the next step.

If only Tommy could somehow get Techno attached to him. Imprinting would be best. But heaven knows how to do that. Tommy would honestly kill to get internet service right now. Because if he could just look up how to do so then...

And then the thought hit Tommy, '*what am I doing?*'

He stopped cold in his tracks. And a horrible crushing guilt made his mouth sour.

Tommy was... planning on tricking Techno into being his flock by forcing the man to *imprint* on him? Tommy commits crimes, but he is not a bad person. Forcing people to imprint is something the worst of the worst would do. The stories of abuse- of the lack of a proper relationship- made Tommy take a few steps back from his thoughts.

Fuck, forcing somebody to imprint on another is horrible. And somehow Tommy thought that was an acceptable action to take?

Tommy is a thief.

He isn't a villain.

The bird inside of him threw a fit. But when had Tommy started to listen to it in the first place? Tommy wasn't cruel. He wasn't going to steal Technoblade from his home (although technically, he did that already). He wasn't going to force Technoblade to give up his whole life just to live with Tommy.

That's selfish. It's wrong.

Shit.

Tommy had to- he had to stop. Whatever he was doing, he needed to take a few steps back because this was forcing him in a direction he didn't want to go into. The gentle touches, the occasional night sleeping together, and the fingers in his hair, all of that was making Tommy do things he didn't want to do. He would never, *ever* force somebody to imprint on himself, no matter how much his avian instincts wanted him to.

Tommy still had to leave. He had to go home, back to L'Manburg and- and... it wouldn't be as good without Techno there. When had Tommy grown so *attached* to him? It must be- it's got to be one of those stockholm syndromes things. The feelings were false. Tommy was trapped in close quarters with somebody for months, so of course he would grow fond of them.

Tommy started to shiver violently. And it wasn't because of the cold. He stayed outside until the sun began to dip, the orange light sliding over the snow as blue shadows replaced them.

“Hey, are you coming inside?” Tommy heard Techno call out, and he turned stiffly and stared at the man. Already feeling the *loss*, and agonizing over the grief of losing him.

This is going to suck.

Chapter End Notes

There is no funny quip at the end of this chapter. Sit down. We need to have a talk.

It has come to my attention that some of you believe that you can tell me what to do.

I don't have to publish this fic. Its free entertainment for you guys. But I can just as easily give this fic to my friends and they can give me validation instead. I don't have to share this with you guys.

Do not order me around. Don't tell me what tags I should have, what I need to write next, and when exactly I need to update. I was going to post this chapter on Wednesday but I didn't want to reward bad behavior. Just because I update frequently doesn't give you the right to demand things.

Also: I hate I have to say this yet again- this fic is entirely platonic. There are no relationships. Its a Dark SBI fic. If one more person submits an essay where they are reading between the lines and *clearly* this a romantic fic and I'm a horrible person for writing it- kindly leave and never come back.

To the 98% of the other readers who are kind, considerate, and very nice: thank you. This rant isn't meant for you. And I'm sorry that it affected you. I recently got a [twitter](#) so I'll post snippets of future chapters there and announce when I update this fic. Come chat with me there. I'd love your company.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The snow falling from the sky turned into a deluge of rain that never stopped. It was just a shift of a few degrees warmer, but it was a sign that spring was at their doorstep. He had spent days wishing for the chance to go home. He longed to go back to his nest. But as the days grew closer to spring, Tommy knew that this was also the end of spending his time with Technoblade.

But the idea that Tommy couldn't come home and see Techno in his nest haunted him. He didn't want to leave Technoblade behind. He was *Tommy's*.

There was a lot less comfort in the cabin now. Tommy shied away from the hand that reached out to touch his hair. Techno didn't say a word, his face impassive as always. But Tommy's heart already panged with the avoidance.

That night, the fire burned low. Even though Tommy woke up shivering, like he did most nights now, he didn't find his way into the comfort of Techno's arms. He laid in the fake simile of a nest, blankets and pillow crowding around him, and he trembled until his body finally forced himself to pass out again.

The morning afterwards, there was silted silence when once Tommy would fill the air with meaningless chatter. The soup tasted awful, even though there was venison in it. When Techno went out to gather more wood, Tommy curled up in the bathroom and picked at his feathers.

It was *unfair*.

Whatever Tommy wanted, he got. He was the best thief in the world- nothing could stop him. Nothing except himself. He- he respected Techno. Genuinely liked the guy, and that's why he couldn't force himself to go through with his plans. Even though the bird kept telling Tommy to just *take*, Tommy couldn't because he didn't want Techno to hate him. The guy had a good position here in the Empire, he had a family, and Tommy couldn't steal Techno away from everything he loved. It would be so selfish.

Tommy desperately wanted to be selfish.

But as he trembled alone in the cabin, he came to a decision. One week. One more week- and he needed to leave. The snow might not be fully melted, but it should be warm enough during the day for Tommy to fly himself out. One more week, and he would leave the Empire.

Tommy probably could never come back after this. Not with the knowledge of the 'what could have been' that will plague him for the rest of his life. The Empire would be the one place that Tommy could never stomach setting foot in ever again. Not because of the villains

that guarded the land, nor of the dangers that lie within. But because Techno was here. Tommy could never look at him again.

It- it was for Technoblade. Tommy *had* to push him away, or he could never let Techno go. And that would be so unfair to the piglin hybrid if he did.

What was that thing that Disney movies always said? Sometimes letting go is the hardest thing to do.

Tommy wished he never had to have learned this lesson.

Well, the one positive thing was that the silence wasn't the worst thing that Tommy hated anymore. The distance that he created between himself and Techno- *that* was the curse that made Tommy stay up at night. And now... now it was pretty obvious that he was distancing himself from Techno.

Tommy had been moping around when Techno came up and tried to touch his hair again. And Tommy *flinched* away. The hurt look that crossed Techno's face that was quickly covered up by a neutral expression haunted Tommy.

He didn't- Tommy didn't want to hurt Techno. That's why he was pulling away! So Tommy wouldn't ruin Techno's life.

But it still felt like he was the monster.

Tommy lasted three days- or more accurately, Techno lasted three days. Tommy shivered in his nest in the middle of the night. The fire was completely out this time, leaving the room frosty. He had woken up hours ago, but he refused to get up. The second he did- Techno would reach out and grab him and Tommy didn't have the will power to give up one last cuddle. And if he gave in, then what else would he do?

His breath was coming out in white puffs, and Tommy pressed himself further into the mattress. But the cold still slithered its fingers into his skin, and Tommy trembled. It was going to be another long night- and Tommy was resigned to shaking until the morning came.

Then a shadow moved, and Techno was off the couch. Tommy squeezed his eyes shut, pretending that he was asleep. Even though his body betrayed him by shivering. The mattress dipped as Techno made his way into Tommy's faux nest, and those large hands- the ones that Tommy wanted *so desperately* to touch him- gently pulled Tommy closer.

Techno was warm. He always had been. And Tommy pressed himself closer without meaning to. Trying to stave away the cold that haunted him.

Techno adjusted his grip on Tommy until the two of them were curled up together on the mattress. And Tommy could hear his heart beat- a steady thump-thump that was so familiar it hurt.

It was agonizing. But it was so *good*.

“Stubborn kid,” Techno murmured, “why didn’t you come to me?”

Tommy didn’t respond. He didn’t want to- so afraid of what his answer would be. Instead he pressed his face into Techno’s chest. And those familiar fingers came up and ran through Tommy’s hair. He didn’t deserve this. He should get that loving touch- not when Tommy is going to break everything into pieces. A sad little sigh came from Tommy, even though he leaned up into Techno’s hand.

“What’s been bothering you, Theseus?” Techno rumbled. “You’ve been pulling away. What did I do?”

Tommy’s wings jerked at the question. “Nothing,” Tommy said muffled, “you didn’t do anything.”

“Then why are you running away from me?” Techno’s fingers played with a strand of Tommy’s hair.

‘I’m going to leave you. And I don’t want to. I want to keep you against your will.’ Tommy thought, but instead he said, “j’st needed some space. I’m sorry.”

Techno rumbled, and the sound nearly brought Tommy to tears. “I’ll always be here for you, Theseus. You know you can tell me anything, right?” Tommy nodded against his chest. “Good.” And Tommy felt it when Techno bumped their foreheads together so softly, and it made him want to cry.

It was raining by the seventh day. One week came and went- and today was supposed to be the day where Tommy was going to cut all ties with this stupid Empire and hop across the border. The dark storm clouds hung in the sky for days, until that very moment when Tommy was ready to leave did they open up their arms and let loose a torrent of rain and lightning.

It wasn’t ideal. But Tommy had flown in worse conditions. The bird side of his brain said *‘let’s wait one more day.’* But he knew, without a doubt, that if Tommy stayed one more day then what will stop him from spending another day here after that? Every day Tommy would tell himself he would leave in the morning, and yet he could never force himself to. He would forever be trapped at this cabin. Unable to will himself to leave.

Today was the only day he could go- and it hurt. Ripping up his insides and leaving him bleeding.

Tommy waited until Techno was out of the cabin again before he moved to collect his things. He didn’t come into this cabin with anything, but he was going to leave with *something*. Tommy had mentally prepared himself for what to take and what to leave behind- and it was strange to pick things up that weren’t precious gems and know that they were a part of his treasures. Tommy rarely got attached to things that didn’t glisten in the sunshine.

The carved cow that Techno gave to him, Ricola. The deck of cards that was *still* missing the king of hearts. A few of the stones that Tommy had given Techno, but now he was selfishly taking back- and last but not least the ugly as fuck quilt. The blanket was ratty and nasty- but

it had been a shelter and a comfort for the last few months. It was *worthy* of being in Tommy's nest now.

He folded the items into the blanket, and tucked it under his arms. And with one long look, Tommy gazed around the cabin. Prime, he hated it here. But it gave him so many good memories too. A part of him wanted to burn it down. But he could never do that- it was both a shelter and a prison.

"So you're leaving, huh."

Tommy jumped, and whirled around. There, with rain water falling off of his clothes, was Techno. Far too early to be back home. His eyes were narrowed and a pinched angry expression was on his face. "Too good to say goodbye?"

"Sorry," Tommy swallowed, "I didn't- I- I'm sorry." And he *was*. He had been sorry since the second he decided to leave- guilt plagued him knowing that he had to *go* . And never come back. Saying goodbye was never in his plan, because Tommy didn't have the strength to ever say it.

"I knew you were going to do this." Techno said flatly, "you weren't very good at hiding it."

Tommy... Tommy couldn't look at him. The accusing stare, the hurt expression- it was selfish. But he didn't want to see the pain he inflicted on Techno. Tommy should. It was his punishment. But his heart couldn't take the agony.

"I'm sorry," Tommy repeated, and then took a step back. "I gotta go," he said softly. "I can't stay here anymore." '*I can't be around you anymore.*'

The backdoor slammed shut with a *crack*. Tommy flinched, still holding the blanket tightly with both arms as if to protect himself. With two strides, Techno was just *there*. Tommy stumbled back, the table knocking into him as he tried to make some distance between the two. But Techno's hands slammed down on the table on either side of him, leaning into Tommy. Trapping him. Rain water dripped down onto Tommy, as Techno stared him down like he was prey.

"You are *not* leaving, Theseus." Techno's voice shook the very air. "I will not allow it." There was a deep growl, not like the purr that Tommy knew and loved. But the one that shook Tommy's avian brain down to its core. *Predator*.

It snapped Tommy out of it. Anger rose up to greet Tommy like an old friend. It was better than the guilt that gnawed on him from the inside out. He welcomed it with open arms. "Yeah?" Tommy challenged, his eyes flashing as he stared Techno down. "I can do what I want, bitch. You're not the boss of me!"

Technoblade stared down at Tommy, his red eyes nearly glowing in the darkness. "I don't think you've understood me, Theseus. You don't get to run away from me. Not when I own you. You are *mine*."

And something within Tommy *snapped*.

Tommy knew Techno enough now that he was beyond stubborn. No matter how much Tommy would scream his protests until he was blue in the face, Techno would never listen. Well, guess what! Tommy was about to reverse uno card this bitch

That tenuous peace inside of him- the small bit of string that Tommy had tied around his instincts, *broke*. The bird raised it's head and snapped it's beak, before laying it's eyes on it's new target. The one thing Tommy couldn't have- and now he *is going to get it*.

Tommy reached up, grabbing Techno's shirt and pulling him closer. Lightning flashed. He bared his teeth hissing out, "if I'm yours, you son of a bitch, then you're fucking mine too!" The thunder boomed, as if to seal the deal.

And Tommy *attacked*.

The bird in his head screeched in bloodthirsty victory.

An inhuman snarl left Tommy's lips as he sank his teeth into Techno's shoulder. It was the nearest thing to his face, and the sudden vicious desire to draw blood was too damning. Too strong to resist. Tommy's fingertips felt strange, almost claw-like, as he dug them into Techno's body. Unwilling to let go and unforgiving in their capture.

Techno let out a pained growl and he stumbled from the sudden viscous attack, but Tommy didn't let go. He only held on tighter. Techno is *his*. *His his his*. *His flock*. *His everything*. Tommy didn't unlatch himself as he gave out a horrible screeching hiss. And Techno stopped moving, in shock or of Tommy's sudden animalistic violence subduing the predator. "Theseus."

Tommy didn't care. All he knew was that his *flock* was finally *his*. And he won't ever let go. Never ever never.

Blood dripped into his mouth, his fangs digging in deep. Tommy curled up, pressing himself as far as he could into the hold of his flock. He will not let go. Will not let his new flock leave. *They always left*. So Tommy will not allow them to go, not without him.

"You have to be in deep," Tommy could hear a voice say. He didn't- he couldn't understand it. "Can you hear me, Theseus?" A hand came up and petted at Tommy's hair, and *yeeessss* Flock is so kind. So forgiving. Flock would not leave- yes? Yes. Flock *cannot leave*. But Tommy could probably stop biting him. But biting hurts. And Tommy didn't want to hurt Flock.

Unlocking his jaw with a medium amount of effort, Tommy could taste blood. He licked his lips, and the bird in him cooed in satisfaction. The perfect hunt- with the best kind of reward. It made him lift his wings in pride, preening over a job well done.

Flock was *his* now.

Then those hands were pulling at Tommy. Trying to pry him off of his prey! No! With a croak, Tommy's fingers tightened even harder and he could feel the warm liquid seeping around his nails. Puncturing Flock's shoulders.

“Shhh,” Flock said softly, petting Tommy’s hair again. “I’m not making you get off. I’m not. I just want to see your eyes, Theseus. Can you do that for me? Can I see your pretty blue eyes?” Flock whispered, and Tommy cocked his head before he could finally understand.

His feathers rustled, Flock *thought his eyes were pretty*. Slowly he allowed the hand to pull him from his tight embrace until Tommy could meet the gaze of his prey. And Flock purred, and that hand came up and took Tommy by the chin, a thumb coming up and rubbing at the wet line that ran down from Tommy’s mouth.

“You look *stunning* with blood on you.” Flock said, and Tommy couldn’t help himself. He let out a warbling little chirp, raising his head up in pride. Yes! Yes it felt so good to chirp. Chirp at his new flock. Tommy couldn’t stop from a wave of peeps and coos fell from his mouth, leaning into the hand. “You’re so good, aren’t you, Theseus. And here I was thinking you’d never let me be your flock. I thought you’d do this months ago.”

A trill escaped, and Tommy’s wings rose up to cover the two of them. Caging the two of them together. His prey had *wanted* to be his flock? Why didn’t Tommy think of that? It would have saved him the heartache. Although the exact reason why he couldn’t be with his flock before somehow eluded him at the moment.

Wait- Tommy perked up at the thought. He had- he had *two* flock members now. He couldn’t just call them both the name ‘flock’ now. Tommy never had this problem before, and he trilled again at the thought of it. He had *two*. *TWO* whole people as his family. Truly, Tommy is drowning in blessings to have so many now.

He blinked up at prey... no... what was his name again? A semblance of awareness seeped in and the bird took the name and ran with it, shoving the intelligence back- Techno. Yes. Techno. Good. Good name for his flock. Yes.

The hand on his face moved, and Tommy would have protested if it hadn’t gingerly touched Tommy’s wing.

Tommy’s body shuddered and fell completely limp into Techno’s hold. Techno barely stumbled from the sudden shift in balance, as Tommy leaned into his arms. Tommy’s fingers loosen from their grip as he peeped out his distress. He- he *wanted*. Wanted Techno to preen him so badly. He couldn’t wait another second- it was unbearable. His cries didn’t stop, even as Techno pulled him over to the nest.

“It’s okay, I’m here.” Techno murmured softly, his hands so big and gentle. Tommy could feel tears start to form, weeping openly as he just wanted his flock to preen him. He couldn’t form the words, only short sounds of his desperation could leave his mouth in hiccups. “I’m here, I won’t leave you. I’m here.”

Techno was behind him. And the bird inside wailed, which caused Tommy to sob uncontrollably, because Techno was leaving him! Leaving him just like his other flock member did. But then those hands, those perfect soft and giving hands, were on his feathers again. And Tommy stopped, freezing up for a second, then melted like a pile of goo. Collapsing into a hunched ball, leaving his wings to hang limply on his back for Techno to reach.

“That’s it, Theseus.” Techno murmured from behind Tommy, “just let go.”

Tommy obeyed, and then his *flock* was preening him. Lifting up his feathers softly. Pulling them straight with a soothing petting motion, Techno’s fingers running through the soft down underneath. And then gently tugging out the old and broken ones.

Tommy could only open his mouth and let out a string of chirps, whistles, and coos. His heart just felt so light- so freeing. His skin buzzed with energy, and he felt like he was flying. It was just so *wonderful*.

Tommy slumped forwards, further and further the longer the preening went. His flock slowly moved down his wings, and Tommy let Techno pull his wing out to gaze at it’s full length. Tommy was good. So good he held it open as Techno gently tugged at his feathers. Whistling in delight.

And when Techno touched that one spot that just *felt so perfect*, Tommy felt a weird cold flat pressure on his face. He opened his eyes and lifted his head up from the floor as he heard Techno start to laugh behind him.

“I didn’t think I was so good for you to just fall over.” Techno said mirthfully, and Tommy just owlishly blinked at him from the ground. “You’re adorable, come here.”

Tommy reached out a hand and Techno pulled him in to lay across his lap. “I’m almost done,” Techno said. “Then we can stay in the nest together. How does that sound?”

Wonderful. Tommy let out a happy trill. And Techno pulled Tommy’s wing out again and continued to work his way through his feathers. Tommy could feel Techno purring. And he let out a series of pleased clicks as he pressed himself further into Techno’s hold.

There was a distinct sense of dissatisfaction when Techno stopped preening Tommy. But he was too far under to really care, nor to beg Techno to continue. He cooed as Techno laid down in the nest, and Tommy could feel his hair being played with.

“You are not leaving me, Theseus.” Techno said softly, “not now. Not ever.”

Tommy pulled his head up and gazed at Techno. And the piglin hybrid gave Tommy a soft smile. Tommy had to... he had to preen Techno back? It would be selfish if Tommy only benefited from this, right? They are a flock, and they took care of each other now.

Tommy shakily reached out and touched Techno’s hair. He let out a confused little chirp, watching to see if it was okay for him to touch. And the purr got deeper. And Tommy replied with a warble.

“Yes.” Techno grunted, and Tommy couldn’t stop himself. He surged up from Techno’s lap to get closer, to study his flock’s long and pretty hair. He had wanted to touch it- feel it in his fingers for months now. And it was just as glorious as Tommy had thought it was going to be. His fingers hooked into the strands and they were so silky. Even after months of only having to wash their hair with bars of soap, it was so soft. Tommy let out a soft peep, a shiver

running down his back as he petted at it. Techno reached over and pulled Tommy closer, his own fingers reaching out and touching Tommy's wings.

Flock. The bird and Tommy thought together.

Tommy's braids weren't as neat as Techno's were. They were a bit lumpy, and Tommy had plucked one of his own feathers to thread it into the braid. Techno purred, his fingers threading through Tommy's locks. "Wish your hair was longer," Techno breathed, his pupils blown wide, "wish I could do the same."

Tommy shivered at the idea of Techno's braids in his own hair- even though having long hair was a pain to maintain. It made him yearn. He could grow his hair out. And Techno could spend hours pulling it up into braids, and letting it fall down around his ears again before starting it all over. The thought made Tommy yearn for it, and he pressed his face into Techno's hands.

Techno's fingers paused around Tommy's ears, his thumb brushing against his lobes. "You would look so *good* with pierced ears. Absolutely gorgeous." The touch was gentle, and Tommy pushed his head into Techno's palm with a small purr.

And Tommy *believed* him.

The weight of Theseus on top of him was comfortable, and not heavy enough for Techno to mind it. The small lithe form lay across his chest, Theseus' fingers digging into Techno's sweater to keep him in place. Not that Techno would go anywhere, not when he had been waiting for this exact moment for months. His hand cupped around the back of Theseus' neck, his fingers idly playing with the baby hairs there.

It took a bit longer than what Techno had hoped for. Despite the fact that Theseus swore up and down that he had a flock, his actions betrayed him. The courting gifts that Techno would give him would be received with befuddlement. Theseus stumbled through the motions of building a nest meant for two, unpracticed and uncertain.

Hell, even when Theseus was starting to court Techno back with hesitant and shy actions, like bumping his wings occasionally into Techno's face or gifting a rock or two was like watching a fawn stumbling to their feet for the first time. It was clear that Theseus had never been *wanted* before. And it showed.

It was probably what took it so long, Techno mused. But that was a good sign, overall. That meant Techno didn't have to pry Theseus from others, the only flock he had was *Techno*.

There was nowhere else to go. Nobody to turn to, when inevitably Theseus finds out about the lies that Techno wove.

He is not a saint. He's a villain. And Techno will not apologize, he *got what he wanted*.

There will be an adjustment period, Theseus will have a hard time coming to terms with life in the castle. Not to mention, Phil would be crawling around the walls trying to find the baby

avian in his territory. Techno would have to enlist Wilbur, but it would only take a little bit of persuasion. But once Phil adjusted it would be fine.

The idea of Wilbur and Theseus curled up in the same den with each other made Techno's fingers curl possessively into the golden hair. Tightening his grip, almost pulling on the locks. A deep satisfied purr started in his chest. And it grew only louder as Techno envisioned them in Phil's nest, the delicate golden wings spread out as their father crooned and preened Theseus. Phil's dangerous black talons dipping into the feathers and gently putting them back into shape.

His whole sounder, all together to dote on their newest addition. Wilbur would *love* having another brother. And Phil wouldn't be able to resist the new chick in his nest. They were greedy creatures, possessive and dangerous. Once they decided what was theirs, it would be hell to pry it from their grasp.

Theseus sighed slightly, and Techno paused in his ministrations to loosen his grip that had slowly tightened. Staring down at the kid who turned his whole world upside down. Techno wouldn't complain, he was the one benefiting from this situation.

Tomorrow.

Techno would take Theseus and leave, and tomorrow they will return to the Empire. He hadn't been twiddling his thumbs idly the last few months. His hunting also allowed him to scout the area out, and he knew of a distant farm a few miles north of here. That would be his first stop. And from there, he could reach out to Wilbur or perhaps Eret.

But for now, Techno was very content laying here with Theseus on top of him. He could worry about Phil tomorrow. This was the final night in this cabin, and Techno was enjoying it while it lasted.

Chapter End Notes

Techno: Ah, yes, I shall make this child imprint on me. He will be nice and cute and he'll just fall into my arms.

Tommy imprinting: goes fucking feral

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

slides the chapter in before midnight, sweating and trembling

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There comes a time and a moment when waking up that feels like absolute garbage.

Tommy had done it a few times, once when Tubbo and him and both were under fire and a bomb knocked them clean out. They somehow escaped with only a few bruises and a scraped knee. Another time was when Jester egged him on to try alcohol for the first time, and Tommy had been sick for days afterwards. He had been fourteen, a bit tall for his age, and had managed to trick Jester into believing that he was an adult. The disguise did not last long after that, and there was a no-alcohol ban across Las Nevadas for Red, despite his reputation.

Tommy could feel the feathers pressing up against his face, sticking uncomfortably. He lifted his head, and found it pounding like a drum. With a groan, he lifted himself up from the floor. Why the hell was he-?

He glanced around, half of his body was on the mattress itself, his legs tangled up in a blanket. The other half was on the wood floor. Feathers were strewn across the blankets and pillows, more so than usual. And laying in the nest was Techno, and judging by his deep breaths, was deep asleep.

What the fuck?

Tommy blinked sluggishly, glancing around, trying to piece together what the hell was going on. His mind churned, and he tried to think back to what happened the day prior. All he could focus on was his headache though, and his wings flapped nervously.

Wait just a second. Tommy stretched his back, and extended his wings. They felt... light. Sucking in a quick breath Tommy turned to observe his wings, and found them *clean*. And suddenly the vague and fuzzy memories got a little bit clearer.

Oh Prime.

He had- Tommy had *imprinted*.

Holy shit.

The bird in his head let out a little trill of happiness, puffing out it's feathers and cocking it's head with joy. And Tommy stared over at Technoblade, his *flock*. There were thick and

sloppy braids in his hair, nothing like the kind that Techno would wear. The vague memory of touching the pink strands and weaving feathers into it was there- and Tommy almost felt ill.

He had imprinted. Full on, no doubts about it, made Technoblade his flock. *His flock*. That meant- he was family now. Tommy had a family.

Normally that kind of thought would make Tommy happy, joyful even. But this was *Technoblade*. General of the Antarctica Empire. The guy was a *job*. Tommy was going to steal him away for material wealth, nothing more should have come from it.

And now Tommy was stuck with him for *life*.

His mouth was dry suddenly. And Tommy picked himself up and fucking booked it to the kitchen. He had to stay calm. To think things through, and not panic.

It wasn't working.

He had one job. *One job*. And it was to not get attached. Now what was he going to do? Steal Techno away for his own gain? That would be pretty shitty. Go ahead with the plan to make Techno imprint on Tommy? Even worse!

The only other option Tommy could think of was to just... *leave*.

He brought this on himself. Before, it would hurt to go, yes. But now it would be fucking agony. The bird claimed Techno. And right now, even thinking about leaving him, made Tommy's whole heart ache at the thought. It would be like- no. It wouldn't because this time Tommy had a choice in the matter of who his flock was.

Tommy leaned on the counter in the shitty kitchen. Brushing his hands through his long hair, staring out a window. He should go. He really oughta go. Before Techno woke up. The memory of their argument before things went fuzzy wasn't very clear, but Tommy got the vibe that Techno wasn't happy to see him leaving.

But something made Tommy stay. And fuck, it was the bird. Just the thought of leaving was just... *impossible*. Tommy could not physically make himself walk out the door. Not without a good reason to, anyways. His flock always left *him*. Now, Tommy couldn't bring himself to do the same.

As of right now, Tommy's flock was in the other room and was asleep. He should wait until Techno wakes up. Right? So Tommy wasn't leaving him unprotected. But, on the other hand, Techno was in a nest. And nests were always safe.

Tommy could not move. Couldn't throw himself out the window, couldn't make himself walk back into the other room. He stayed there, stuck. Watching as the sun rose on this fucking awful day, trying to figure out how to just *go*.

Techno woke up. Tommy could hear him get to his feet and stumble around, could hear him pause and the frantic shuffling as he pulled the nest apart. The thump-thump-thump as

Techno crossed to the kitchen and found Tommy standing there. The avian couldn't bear to look at him.

And for a brief moment, Tommy thought about breaking into tears. To let his heartbreak show, to crawl into Techno's arms for comfort of the inevitable departure between the two of them. Heaven knows the bird wanted to.

But Tommy had one goal now, and it was to leave.

"So," Tommy croaked, "that just happened, huh?"

Prime, what did Techno think about this? Some random bird kid stole him away, and just when things were looking up, the kid *mauls* him or some shit out of nowhere- it made Tommy's face heat up in embarrassment. He should have had better control over himself. And now it wasn't only Tommy who was going to suffer, but Techno was now involved in this as well.

"Shit." Tommy said, as Techno didn't say a word. "Shit, fuck, shit, damn. This- this shouldn't have happened." He dragged his fingers through his hair, gripping it and pulling at it. "I'm sorry."

There was a rustle of movement, and a hand landed on Tommy's shoulder. Pulling him up, and into Techno's arms. "You don't have to apologize. Instincts always get the best of us."

"Yeah, but I should have been better." Tommy avoided looking Techno in his face, slumping into the hold as the bird crowed happily. He shouldn't be giving in to this. He need to fight and spit and get away-

But Tommy was weak.

Something caught his eye. A stain of reddish flaky crust that clung to Techno's shirt. And without meaning to, Tommy gripped at the shirt and pulled it away, revealing the red and angry teeth marks on Techno's shoulder. "Did I- did I *bite* you? "

"Sort of-"

"Holy fucking shit!" Tommy pulled himself out of Techno's arms, his wings bristling with anger. It wasn't aimed at Techno, but at himself. "I can't believe I *bit* you. What the hell, bird brain?" The last part was aimed at the bird who just fluttered it's wings nonchalantly.

"It's not that bad-"

"You look like you were in a shitty vampire film!" Tommy threw his hands into the air. And finally he had an *excuse*. He was so mad at himself, how could he hurt his own *flock*, but it was enough.

Tommy had to leave before he hurt Techno even more than before.

It was flimsy as fuck, and not to mention dumb. But Tommy latched onto it with his greedy hands. It would be enough to take the first step out of here. And after that, Tommy could just

force himself to keep going.

“I’m fine, Theseus.” Techno crossed his arms and leaned up against the doorway. Tommy still refused to look at him. “I’ve had worse.”

“It doesn’t excuse me for what I did.” Tommy said, working himself up. He had to keep going, or else his drive would fail him again. And then he turned to finally face Techno. With his stupid pink hair in those horrible braids with golden feathers stuck in there with no sense or rhythm. He looked silly. Fuck, and those cool eyes regarding Tommy with a single raised eyebrow.

The guy still looked intimidating even with Tommy’s shitty childish hairstyle.

Damn him.

Tommy pushed past Techno back into the living room, his wings flapping slightly. They felt great, although Tommy would never say it out loud. He shoved his socked feet into his beat up sneakers, “well it’s been fun and all, but let’s never do this again.”

“Heh?”

“You got all pissy I tried to leave before without a goodbye,” at least that’s what Tommy could vaguely recall. He turned and met Techno’s hard gaze, “so bye. I’m going. It’s been a time, and it’s lovely to meet you, so have a nice life.”

“Theseus-” Techno’s eyes narrowed, and Tommy whirled around to avoid it. The bird was already starting to protest, and he couldn’t face Techno and deal with his shitty instincts at the same time.

“Don’t worry, I’ll send postcards. Do you think the Empire delivers mail from the outside though?” Tommy paused, thinking about it, before resuming his frantic packing. His blanket with all of the objects had been tossed to the side, and he picked it up. Checking to see if it’s contents were still there.

Heavy feet hit the ground, and Techno was looming over him. A pinched expression on his face. Tommy twirled around him, easily evading him. Grabbing his jacket from where it was tossed across the couch.

“Theseus,” Techno said, “just stay. Maybe you should live in the Empire.”

Tommy let out a bitter laugh at that. “Stay in this shitty Empire?” He looked back over at Techno, “no fucking way. I don’t know if you know this, but I think the Empire is going to have a few issues with me. First, I kidnapped you. Secondly, I’m an *avian*. The Angel of Death will kill me if he sees me. Avians don’t like to share.”

“I can put in a good word with the Emperor for you.”

“Still, no thanks.” Tommy replied. “I have a life outside of here. Friends, you know? And I bet they think I’m dead or something. I have to go terrorize them to let them know that I am still alive.”

“Theseus, I don’t think you should leave.”

“That’s not up to me.” Tommy shot back, anger flaring his wings. Finally meeting Techno’s eyes, “this place will kill me if I stay here long enough. And I’m not going to hang out just to let that happen. I’m going. And that’s *final*.”

Techno took a step forward, the only sound in the cabin. The fire had died a long time ago. “Okay, how about this instead. Theseus, I won’t *let* you leave.”

Tommy snorted, “yeah, and how will you do that?” He could feel the fight burning up inside. This was a good thing. If Tommy pushed Techno far enough away, then it wouldn’t hurt as much when he leaves the Empire.

“Easily,” Techno replied flatly, “I can just tie you up and throw you over my shoulder until I find civilization.”

“Uhuh, right.” Tommy responded equally dryly. “As if you could keep me still long enough to tie me up.”

“Don’t challenge me,” There was a dangerous tone in Techno’s voice.

“Don’t be a fucking prick, Techno.” Tommy shot back. His wings bristling in anger, “why is it I try to speak with you, you keep shutting me down? I’m not some kid, okay? You- you don’t control me!”

“That’s the problem, Theseus. I *do* own you.” Techno was *right there*. His hands gripping Tommy’s arms like bands, holding him in place. Tommy stared up at Techno with a glare.

“No you don’t.” Tommy tried to jerk out of the hold, but found it to be too tight. Instead he leaned upwards, baring his teeth with a snarl. “Nobody *owns* me. I’m a fucking person, Techno. And I’m going to leave this shitty cabin.”

“No you aren’t.”

“So what- you’re going to keep me trapped here?”

“I was thinking of taking you home with me today,” Techno’s grip tightened, and Tommy was certain he was going to get bruises from this. He ignored the bird that was trilling happily, that Techno wanted to go bring Tommy home. “But I would prefer not to stay here, to be honest.”

Tommy let out a bitter laugh, “fuck you Technobitch. I’m not some pet to be brought home. Don’t treat me like I don’t know any better. I’m a human being.” Tommy fought against the hold. “I have a life, things to do, people to see. Hell, I told you, Techno. I’m the greatest thief in the *world*. I have a reputation to keep up!”

“Of course,” Techno brushed him off like Tommy was a kid. His tone said that he didn’t believe Tommy. “I don’t want to harm your reputation.”

“You don’t believe me?” Tommy twitched slightly, his anger failing for a moment as he suddenly felt a stab of betrayal. Even the bird was offended for a moment, because Tommy had been positive that Techno liked the stories that Tommy told him of his jobs.

Hold up, pause the argument *right now*. This was more important.

Techno tilted his head in a ‘so-so’ position. “It’s hard to believe that when I’ve been living with you for the past few months. I don’t really see it, you know?”

Don’t really see it? Tommy and the bird were in agreement now, both frothing at the mouth. Tommy is the *greatest thief in the world* and he is fucking proud of that!

“Excuse me? I fucking stole you!” Tommy shouted, anger making his wings flare out. The feathers puffing out and bristling with rage. Techno’s grip loosened, and Tommy pulled himself away. Stumbling back until he hit the couch.

“Yeah, I guess. But it wasn’t a very good job, now was it?” Techno replied coolly, “and besides, I’ve met Drista. I don’t think you’re her.”

Tommy spluttered, “*Drista?* Drista is *not* the best thief in the world.”

“I think you’re in denial.”

“Drista is good at grifting! That is a different thing altogether. Sure, she steals. But she doesn’t-”

“She walked in and literally stole the hats off the royal family.” Techno said blandly.

Tommy paused. Oh, Drista had *balls*. “I can do the same thing.” Tommy weakly said, but honestly- *how?* She stole the *hats* off of the Syndicate? Next time he meets her while pulling a job he’ll ask for the story. And there *will* be a next time, because Tommy isn’t staying here.

“Right, I’m sure you can.” Techno sarcastically replied, it made Tommy’s wings bristle at the insult.

The doubt hurt a lot more than Tommy thought it would. Because- because Tommy opened himself up to Techno in ways that he never did before. Actually telling Techno about his jobs and- and other shit! It was painful knowing that Techno was just humoring him.

“I can!” Tommy shot back his voice wavering, “and it’ll be just as easy leaving this stupid Empire behind. No matter what you do or say, I’m going!”

“Probably should have thought that through before imprinting on me,” Techno responded, crossing his arms.

The words were like a nail pounded in with a hammer. Tommy hadn’t said it out loud in fear of making it real.

Prime, Tommy *really had* imprinted on Techno. And the guy even knew it too.

Fuck.

Tommy let out a low frustrated growl. He was going nowhere with this conversation. “It just happened! I didn’t-” Tommy narrowed his eyes at Techno, “why are you giving me that look.”

“I’m not doing anything.”

“That was the ‘I’m hiding something’ face. What are you planning?” Tommy said.

Techno shrugged, “so anyways-”

“No. You are not changing the subject. You got that look when I said that I couldn’t help but get imprinted-” and there was that look again! “What did you do?”

Techno froze. Staring down at Tommy with an unreadable look.

And then-

-a slow smirk crossed his face. “Oh Theseus, you’re too smart for your own good.” Techno purred with amusement, a shadow crossing over his face. Tommy was suddenly hit with a realization-

Techno... looked like a *villain*.

The ease he carried himself. Techno never shied away from anything, always so confident and strong. And he looked down at Tommy like he just... just foiled his plans or some crazy shit. Something dark and heinous in his red eyes.

“What did you do?” Tommy whispered again. His heart in his throat. He tried to take a step back but he hit the couch, jolting at the touch. His wings curled up against his back in fear.

Techno’s hand landed on Tommy’s shoulder again, warm and familiar. But it’s normal comfort was gone, leaving it as a shackle clamping down on him. Techno tugged Tommy closer into a semblance of a hug. “It was so easy, Theseus.” Techno’s breath moved the hair around Tommy’s ears, the warmth of it replaced by a chilling cold. “You hardly fought at all, so open and receptive to everything I did. Once I got you used to my scent, you never shied away from my touch.”

Techno pulled his hand up and played with a strand of Tommy’s hair, “it just took some time, but we had so much of it on our hands, didn’t we Theseus? I wanted you in my arms since I saw your pretty little wings. And my family will *love* to keep you. I just had to ensure you’d stay with me.”

Tommy’s heart jackhammered in his dry mouth, unable to move. Frozen, as his mind whirled and his world turned upside down. He had forgotten that Techno is the general of the Empire. The right hand man of the Syndicate- and that title had weight behind it. He waged wars, calculated risks, and *won* them.

The whole time, Tommy was being played the fool.

“You’re sick.” Tommy breathed, his voice trembling. “You- you forced me to-”

“I didn’t force you to do anything, you did it all by your own volition.” Techno replied softly as his fingers curled through Tommy’s hair, “I simply just helped you along, that’s all.”

Tommy bit back a sob. Thick and heavy tears made his vision blurry, and they fell like stars from his eyes. He felt ill. A sick feeling forming in his stomach at the memories that rose to greet him. The times when Techno would tuck his head against the piglins neck- that was to get him to scent him. When the fire would burn low and somehow they didn’t have enough firewood, Techno would just pull Tommy into his arms to sleep. The kind touches and comfort that Tommy felt being around Techno-

It was all false.

A hysterical thought appeared, Tommy had wanted to do the same to Technoblade. He had wanted to make Techno never leave him. But he had resisted the urge, because Tommy wasn’t a *monster*.

How the tables had turned.

Fuck, what was even real? All the times that Techno held him, comforted him, and let Tommy talk his ear off, was that even real? When Techno noticed Tommy was cold and pulled him into a hug, was that false?

It had to be, because- because Tommy was Techno’s enemy. From the very start of their relationship, Tommy had kidnapped Techno. He was his jailer, and Techno maneuvered his way into his good graces just to manipulate him.

The last few months weren’t *real*.

It was like a gut punch. Leaving Tommy gasping for breath as it felt like his world was tumbling down from under his feet.

He couldn’t even *comprehend* it yet. The magnitude of the lie was just too big, too horrible to wrap his head around it.

“It’s okay, Theseus.” Techno’s thumb swiped across his cheek, guiding the tears away. “I promise, you’ll like living at the castle. You’ll be happy. We’ll take care of you.”

“No.” Tommy whispered, “I don’t- I don’t want to.”

What would his life be like, living in a cage? Would he just be some pretty bird locked away for some entertainment. It was some pretty twisted revenge. But it fit. The whole time Techno was manipulating Tommy into imprinting onto him just to backstab him.

Tommy’s eyes caught on something metallic, and suddenly his hope returned. The cuff! He had almost forgotten about it. His arms came up and pushed against Techno’s solid chest. The piglin hybrid didn’t move, still curling around Tommy as if nothing was happening.

“Stop it!” Tommy’s voice was wet, “get away from me, bitch!”

“Calm down, Theseus.” Techno’s hands ran down Tommy’s wings in a soothing motion. It made Tommy feel sick at his sweet touch.

Tommy snarled, “*Technoblade, leave me alone.*” The command catching on the enchanted metal.

Techno jerked slightly, his hands falling away and-

With a low snarl that made Tommy flinch violently, Techno reached over and ripped the iron cuff *in half*.

The iron hit the ground with a dull thud. And Tommy stared at it as he began to hyperventilate, the metal twisted from the pure *strength*. Before he could snap himself out of it- before he could even think to move- Techno was on him again. Grabbing his wrist and pulling him into his arms.

Tommy twisted away. His years of evasion and tricks taking over, letting him stumble back and away from the behemoth that advanced on him. Techno was calm, his steps were confident as he swiped at Tommy, who threw himself back and crashed against the furniture.

“Fuck off!” Tommy screeched, “get the fuck away from me!” And then his back hit the wall of the small cabin- and Techno lunged. For such a big guy, he moved incredibly fast. Tommy barely could suck in a breath before Techno was hauling him into his arms, picking Tommy up and pinning his wings. Tommy thrashed wildly, scratching and biting- but Techno didn’t loosen his hold.

Techno shushed him gently, pulling Tommy further into his grip. “I think, perhaps, it’s time for you to go to sleep now.”

“I’m not-” Sleep was the last thing on Tommy’s mind. Adrenaline rushed through him. His stomach was a pit of nerves and oozing sickness, and his mind was reeling from the revelations. There is no way Tommy would ever sleep *now*. Once he got his bearings he would fly his way out of this hell hole. Away from Techno, who had slunk his way into his life and made himself comfortable with his lies.

But there was this *weird* sensation. Tommy’s ears popped, and he was suddenly light headed. It felt like his face was paling, and he buckled in Techno’s grip. A breathy wheeze falling from his lungs. “It’s okay, Theseus,” Techno’s voice was barely heard over the static in Tommy’s ears. “Just give in.” Tommy’s heart stuttered strangely in his chest- and Tommy gasped for more air. His body was seemingly flipping in on itself. His vision had black spots in it and-

Tommy slumped into Techno’s arms.

The small farm house on the edge of society was small, but it was enough to serve Techno’s purpose. The barn was the first objective. The sounds of animals filled the air, and a cow mooed indignantly as Techno opened the door with one hand. There was a large pile of straw, and Techno slipped Theseus off of his shoulder and tossed him into it.

Theseus didn't stir from the motion, and Techno stopped and stared for a second. Double checking that his runt was going to stay where he put him. Techno's jacket was pulled around Theseus, hiding his wings and making him look even younger as the kid drowned in the fabric. A tip of a wing spilled out from under it, matching the color of the hay.

The second thing Techno did was find a saddle. There was a mare in the corner that gave him a side eye, but anything was better than having to walk all the way to a payphone. Hell, if Techno could stumble across one of Phil's crows right now, that would be great. But the chances of that happening was slim on the edge of society. Techno hadn't ridden in a long time, a side effect of taking over and ruling a part of the world. But brushing out the mare and pulling the saddle on her were still familiar enough that it brought back a sense of nostalgia.

Once he was finished, he brought the horse out. Of course, that was when the door to the barn opened once more, and the owner of the farmer walked in. Staring at the slumbering form of Theseus. A growl rumbled deep in his chest, *nobody gets to see his runt*.

"What the hell-" The farmer cried out, locking onto Techno guiding the mare out of her stall. "What do you think you're doing!"

"I am borrowing your horse." Techno responded, "you will be repaid for her services."

"I'm not letting you take her." The farmer held a pitchfork, and he clutched at it. "I don't give two shits who you think you are, but I'll be damned if you think I'll let you walk off with my property."

It was admirable, but Techno had to deal with his brother today. And he didn't want to start it with a headache that this would cause if he tried to be diplomatic about this.

Techno inclined his head, and then raised his arm. The farmer's body gave a *jerk*, forcing the man upright, nearly on his toes. And like a puppet on his strings, Techno manipulated his body. With a twitch of his fingers, the farmer's hands opened up and the pitchfork fell onto the straw covered floor.

There was a terrible choking sound from the farmer, as Techno held his blood in his control. "I don't think you heard me the first time, I am borrowing your horse. She will be returned, eventually. Do you understand?" The words were hard to control, especially with the fact that the farmer was too close to Theseus' unconscious body.

The farmer's face was slowly becoming red as the lack of oxygen began to take effect. His eyes bulged and his hands twitched, trying to fight Techno's hold. Just to make sure the message was clear enough, Techno waited a few seconds more before releasing the man. The farmer dropped to the ground in a heap, a guttural gasp falling from his mouth.

"I-I'm sorry." The farmer replied shakily, "I- I didn't recognize you." He bent forward on his knees, "please, take what you want, Blood God. I won't stop you."

Techno moved again, and the mare followed him as he gently guided her to the entrance to the barn. He let go of the rope to pick Theseus up from the hay. His golden wings melded in with the color of the straw, and Techno only paused for a moment to pick a few strands of it

out of the feathers that touched the hay. Double checking that in the short time his runt was away from his arms that no harm had befallen upon him. Then he tossed Theseus across the mare's back.

Then he paused, looking back at the farmer who trembled on the ground. "Do you have an ender chest?" Techno asked, and the farmer nodded frantically.

"Yes, your majesty. This way," the farmer scrambled to his wobbling feet and guided Techno to a corner of the barn. The ender chest was worn out, unlike the chests that Techno had stashed around the castle.

"Leave." Techno grunted out, and the farmer was quick to do so. With a flick, Techno opened the chest to reveal the items he had stored in it so long ago. A few totems of undying, a stack of emeralds, his extra set of armor, and-

Techno retrieved the phone and pressed the on button.

It vibrated twice as it loaded, and then opened up to the main screen. It was his extra phone, and it didn't have all of the personal touches Techno normally had on it. Instead he waited for the bars to appear in the upper right hand corner, and Techno swiped through the contacts until he came across his brother's profile.

With a press of a button, the buzz of a call rang through the tinny speakers. Techno waited, until he heard a click and a sense of relief hit him as he heard Wilbur snap out, "*what?*"

"Bruh, that's how you greet your brother after months of silence? Total cringe." Techno responded with a slight smile.

There was a splutter, and a rustle of cloth on the other side of the phone. "*Techno?*" Wilbur's voice raised in pitch.

"That is my name."

"Where the hell are you? What- where did you go?"

"So funny story, actually-" Techno turned to the horse and peered at the slumped figure on the saddle. "I found a brother."

"A what."

Chapter End Notes

Techno, holding a kidnapped child: A brother!! :D

Wilbur, frantically trying to do the math: Did- did Phil have another kid or-?

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

HEY READER

THERE ARE ELEMENTS OF DARK SBI IN THIS CHAPTER- IN FACT THERE IS GOING TO BE A LOT OF IT IN THE NEAR FUTURE! IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, CLOSE THE TAB!
BEGONE THOTS.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was a pounding behind Tommy's eyes. A *thud thud thud* that reverberated through him. And it took him a few seconds for him to realize that it wasn't his heartbeat making that noise, and that he was being jostled about. It wasn't just his head making things up. He was in an uncomfortable position on his stomach, and he was being lifted up and down methodically.

"What-" Tommy sluggishly muttered, "when did you get a horse?" He opened his eyes to find that he was looking down at the ground. One hoof stepping in time with the beat, as grass and mud passed by.

"About an hour or two ago." Techno replied, as if that answered the fucking question. Tommy might have pressed more, but his head hurt and there was an uncomfortable pressure on his back.

The sight of the ground made Tommy feel dizzy, and he had to close his eyes to prevent himself from getting sick. But the motion of the horse jolting up and down still made his stomach churn.

"Imma be sick." Tommy mumbled miserably.

A hand grabbed at Tommy's collar and heaved him upright, and Tommy struggled to keep the bile down from the sudden motion. But thankfully sitting upright did help him keep his stomach inside his body, where it should be. The fresh air was like a slap to his face. And Tommy didn't have the energy to do anything more than slump against the figure behind him. The nausea was kept at bay, and Tommy's head lulled with the rocking motion of the horse.

"What's happening?" Tommy finally slurred out. He opened his eyes again to see the clear blue sky above. Trees were slowly passing by, as the horse tramped through the wilderness.

Techno didn't answer. But Tommy's head was starting to work again. His thoughts and memories were clicking in place, and, "for fucks sake," Tommy moaned, "are you seriously kidnapping me?"

Unlike yesterday, Tommy could recall everything that happened before he got knocked out like a weak damsel in distress. This was a pretty bad situation that he was in.

Tommy has been in worse places.

His head ached, and Tommy decided to get angry when his head wasn't spinning around in circles. He could fight later. When Techno's guard was down. Yeah. Brilliant plan.

"Payback is a bitch, isn't it." Techno said.

Tommy let out a weak groan, "I didn't smash your head in, though."

"I did not hurt you."

"Feels like you did." Tommy whined, "this kidnapping sucks. Negative two on a scale of one to ten. I am going to leave such a bad review on your kidnaping yelp. 'Waking up feels like shit, horse isn't that great either,' you'll never get a job again."

"Whatever shall I do."

"Oh, I know. Why don't you let me go." Tommy perked up slightly, but there was an arm wrapped around his torso that squeezed him. Tommy did not make a sad little *squeak* noise from the action, whoever said that is spreading fake news.

"Nice try, but no."

Tommy scoffed, "I wasn't even trying, Tech-no-blade. Trust me, you won't be able to catch me if I try. I'm too fast- too amazing. It comes with being the biggest man on the planet."

"Right."

"I'm so glad you agreed. I *am* the biggest man. Most people don't understand, you know- is that a bird?" Tommy's rambling was cut off by a dark shape flying by. Tommy's eyes didn't track it fast, and it caught him off guard.

"Possibly."

"Cool cool, I love birds. Maybe when I get out of the Empire I could send you that documentary that I was talking about that one time. Where there is a bunch of ravens-

"You're not leaving the Empire."

"I feel like we've had this discussion before." Tommy replied. "You say I can't, but I know I can. I think you're in denial, buddy."

"I might say the same thing about you." Techno snapped the reins and the horse began to trot a bit faster. Tommy groaned, his head was killing him, and he leaned back further into Techno's arms. The faster pace was enough to make Tommy quiet for a few minutes.

“Can- can you go slower?” Tommy weakly asked. One, because he didn’t want to throw up. And two, because he didn’t want to go to whatever destination that Techno had in mind. Fuck, whatever Techno used to knock him out really messed Tommy up. What had he used again? The memory was a distant blur. Did Techno fucking punt his head into the ground or something?

“No.” Techno responded. “We’re almost there, runt.”

“I’m not your-”

And Tommy jerked to the side of the horse and hurled.

-hand snatching Tommy’s collar and pulling him up and over Techno’s shoulder.

The last of the vision faded from Tommy’s mind, and he resisted letting out a tired groan. There was always a chance, no matter how small it was, that something could happen. Like a piano falling from a skyscraper window. The chances of that were ridiculously tiny. But never impossible.

But trying to get away from Techno, hell, getting off of this horse, seemed like it could never happen.

Tommy tried everything in his visions. From falling forward off the horse, slipping off when Techno had his back turned, to even pushing Techno off and making a run for it- every time he would get caught.

Still, Tommy was patient. Sometimes. And he could wait until Techno had his guard down. But his skin crawled every time Techno brushed his arm against him, knowing that whatever affection that Tommy had for him was a falsehood.

Tommy had been *used*.

This whole job was a clusterfuck. And Tommy was regretting picking up that call with Purpled. It had been a Tuesday. Nothing good ever happened on Tuesdays. Tommy should have seen the red flags from the start.

Tommy swayed in the saddle, and Techno’s hand came up and held him in place. “We’re almost there.” Techno said, his breath next to Tommy’s ears.

“Shut up, bitch.” Tommy snapped back, his wings jerking against the ropes. He could feel his feathers puffing up in anger. “I didn’t ask.”

For a master thief, Tommy had never seen the knots that Techno put in the damned rope. He was staring down at it like it had just dishonored himself, his family, and his fucking cow. It kind of looked like a sailors knot but with like, four extra layers around it.

Who would win? Tommy? Or a bit of rope in twisty shapes?

The ropes were tied not too tightly, but equally not too loose for Tommy to wiggle out of it. One around his wrists, another at his ankles, and a third and final rope around Tommy's wings. Gee, it was like Techno knew that Tommy would fly the hell away in a second if Tommy could.

Tommy could *wait*. Even though he shifted around anxiously. The warmth of Techno's coat was a heavy weight, like Techno's palm firmly keeping Tommy in place. And he *hated* it. He wanted to move. If Tommy tried to shrug the coat off Techno would only replace it with a firm touch, his hand staying on his shoulder until it was clear that Techno wanted Tommy to keep it on.

Asshole.

Eventually Techno will slip up. And Tommy is waiting, like a cat ready to pounce on the opportunity. The second they get to civilization, Tommy would be out of there. Techno would be alone, at least for a little bit until he could contact somebody and that would-

They rounded a corner, the horse gently clopping away as the trees dispersed around them. Tommy's jaw dropped as he saw a whole fucking *army* of people there. Half a dozen flashing vehicles surrounded a limousine, with a legion of men wearing light blue coats of the Antarctic Empire standing around.

What.

The *hell*.

They noticed Techno and the men with perfect synchronization *saluted* the guy. Tommy could feel himself gaping- like what? When did Techno contact-?

Tommy's left eye began to twitch uncontrollably.

Okay, okay. New plan. Tommy had to come up with a new plan and it would be a banger. There would be fireworks, with Tommy jumping off a building as an explosion boomed behind him. *Nevermind* that Tommy had literally none of those things, he was going to make it happen.

"Eret." Techno said, as a new guard came up to them. The new person gave Techno a low bow, and Techno smoothly slid off of the horse to stand towering over Eret. "Make sure the horse gets back to it's owner."

Eret gave a polite smile, "of course, sir." He took the reins, and for a hopeful second Tommy thought he could be led away on the back of the horse. And then Techno grabbed him and pulled him under his arm, like he was a bag of potatoes.

"Piss off!" Tommy hissed angrily, giving Techno an killer glare. "Don't you fucking touch me."

Techno only gave Tommy a cool look, before hefting Tommy up a little bit more in his grip before ignoring him completely. Tommy let out a hiss. Eret blinked their white eyes at

Tommy, a surprised expression on their face. Tommy only bared his teeth, daring Eret to say something.

The guard wisely did not.

“There is a cabin,” Techno began to speak, and *yada yada yada*. Tommy tuned him out as Techno talked, his eyes scanning his surroundings. Hopefully he could find something he could use. A distraction or maybe-

There was a guy.

Just chilling in the middle of the soldiers.

His clothes caught Tommy's attention first. Everybody wore the light blue uniform, crisp and not a hair out of place. Everybody was neat, almost like manikins. And this guy was leaning up against the limo, with ripped jeans, a trench coat, and a five o'clock shadow across his jaw. Messy brown hair fell into one of the guy's eyes, as he stared down at his phone and tapped at it. He looked like he just woke up.

Holy *shit*.

Even without his signature mask covering his face like a bootleg version of the phantom of the opera, Tommy *knew* this guy. His face was plastered all over the most wanted board, it was hard not to know him.

It was *Siren*.

Oh *no*.

Tommy was going to fucking *die*.

Okay, okay new plan. Stay the hell away from that guy. Tommy scanned the crowd again, this time searching for literally anything he could use. If he had a rock he could maybe cause a chain reaction or-

Techno finished chatting with the guard and began to walk. *Towards* Siren. Tommy wings tried to flap, but the rope caught them, and he let out a screech in protest. All eyes fell on the two, including Siren's. Tommy didn't care, he just had to get *away*. His fists beat at Techno's chest, his legs flailing.

Fuck this! Tommy thrashed, but Techno's grip was too tight.

“Techno,” Siren lowered his phone, “I know you said you found a kid, but why did you have to pick a feral one?” His voice was husky, and yet buttery smooth.

“I met him in the woods,” Techno replied, not even phased by Tommy's escape attempts. “Where else am I supposed to take kids from?”

Siren scoffed, “I would say the orphanage, but you burned that down years ago.”

“The orphans had it coming, Wilbur.”

Wilbur?

Tommy paused, the rope in his mouth from where he had been frantically chewing on it. *Wilbur?* Wilbur, Techno’s twin brother who is a massive drama bitch? That Wilbur? The Wilbur who cries every time they watch Finding Nemo? *That* Wilbur? The one that Techno would bitch about constantly in the last few months?

Wilbur was *Siren*?

Techno’s brother was a member of the Syndicate?

Tommy swung his head around to get a closer look at Wilbur. Ignoring the heavy bags under his eyes, and the fact that he didn’t have the piglin features like Techno did, they *did* kind of look similar. Wait, did that mean Siren was a piglin hybrid too? Tommy squinted, but he honestly didn’t see any traits. The guy looked like a human.

That is, until Tommy caught sight of the tail swinging gently behind Wilbur. Hanging down to his knees was a tail with a puff of brown curls at the end, much like a piglin would have.

Holy shit Techno is related to Siren.

Tommy *stole* Siren’s brother.

How is he not dead yet?

But it made so much sense! Like Techno’s weird creepy vibes that he made, the confidence that Tommy wouldn’t just up and disappear- he had his badass brother use his weird voice powers to force Tommy to stay. Techno had an ace up his sleeve.

Although it also made sense how Techno had the general job too. What was that one word that meant corruption in the workplace by filling it with family and friends? Oh! That’s right. “*Nepotism*.”

The conversation that Tommy wasn’t paying attention to halted. And Tommy was suddenly aware that Siren was looking at him. “What did you say?” Siren said, befuddled.

Did he say that out loud? Fuck. Well, in for a penny in for a pound. “Nepotism,” he scoffed, giving Techno a stink eye. “Figures that’s how you got your general job. I’m not surprised that there is corruption in the Empire, but I feel like that’s a low blow. Your brother just gave you a cushy job because you’re related to each other. I bet you’re not even good at it.”

“*Heh?*” Techno’s eyebrows shot up.

Siren burst into loud laughter. Slapping his hands on his knees and bending over, shaking his head.

“Theseus I am very good at my job-” Techno said and Tommy just rolled his eyes.

“Yeah, yeah. Tell that to the kid who didn’t steal-”

A hand slapped over Tommy’s mouth. Tommy waited three seconds for saliva to build up in his mouth before giving Techno a wet lick. The man flinched, and gave Tommy a warning look.

“Do you-” Siren was still gasping between laughs, “do you mean this kid,” he pointed to Tommy, “doesn’t know that’s a shitty false identity?”

“Wilbur-” Techno said, a warning in his voice.

A false identity?

Well that’s *not surprising at all*. Figuring Techno lied to Tommy for the past few months, it would just be the cherry on top of the cake to know that General Technoblade actually didn’t exist at all. After all the lies that Techno told him, why would Tommy be surprised to know that *nothing ever really mattered*.

When Techno removed his hand, Tommy asked, “I should’ve known! I mean, who even calls themselves Technoblade? That’s such a fake name. In what world does a mother look at their newborn baby and say, ‘you know what, this child looks like a Technoblade kind of person.’ Like, why am I even surprised? What is your name, Steve? Paul? Fucking Slagathor, demon of darkness and evil?”

The pinched expression on Techno’s face was getting worse the longer Tommy talked. Siren was leaning against the limo, cackling like the insane villain that he was. And Tommy was done. These fuckers think they could just steal him away? Lie to him and think that everything is going to be dandy?

Tommy had a fucking grudge and he was going to get these assholes back, or so help him.

“My name is Technoblade.” Techno said, giving Siren a glare. “I assure you that’s true.”

“I don’t believe you, bitch.” Tommy would have liked to have crossed his arms, but they were tied up. Instead he stuck his tongue out petulantly.

“Techno,” Siren gasped out, reaching over and grabbing Techno’s arm. “Where on *earth* did you find this kid?”

“He didn’t find me, I found-” Techno’s hand covered Tommy’s mouth again. Muffled, Tommy hissed in anger.

“Like I said, in the woods.” Techno said quickly. Tommy narrowed his eyes at Techno. Was he embarrassed that Tommy kidnapped him? He should be.

“So he doesn’t know-”

“No.”

Tommy growled and Siren looked at him like he was a puppy. “Oh this is hilarious.” Siren leaned in and cooed, sickeningly sweet. “You really don’t know anything, do you?”

If Techno’s hand wasn’t covering Tommy’s face, he would be tempted to fucking bite Siren’s nose off. Instead he let out another growl, narrowing his eyes at Siren. Tubbo could do the copyrighted Death Glare better between the two of them, but Tommy knew he looked intimidating enough. Instead Siren reached up and pinched his cheeks, laughing at Tommy’s anger.

“Wilbur, enough. He’s drooling in my hand.”

Hell yeah Tommy was.

Siren pulled away, “alright kiddo. You can do simple math, right? Addition?”

Tommy flicked his middle fingers up at Siren, who looked positively gleeful. “The guts this kid has.” He glanced at Techno before turning back to Tommy with a patronizing look. “If I am a prince. And Techno is my brother. What does that make Techno?”

Techno pulled his hand away, his nose wrinkling in disgust as a glob of saliva dripped from it. “A bitch!” Tommy replied without hesitation.

Siren huffed in laughter, “no no. I mean it. What does that make Techno?”

Tommy squinted at Siren. The easy answer was-

Okay no. That’s not right. Because that would mean-

But if-

-then he-

No.

That’s wrong.

“I don’t understand.” Tommy said, his voice low. He was missing something.

“Wil-” Techno sighed.

Siren waved him off, “no, I want him to figure it out. Come on. You know the answer, kiddo.”

No. Tommy *didn’t* know the answer. He could feel his face getting hot as he blushed, feeling like an idiot. They were messing with him. Being bastards, and trying to mess Tommy up with their lies again. “Shut up.” He growled.

“Come on baby.” Siren said in his simpering voice, and Tommy had a sudden urge to commit violence.

“I am *not* a baby!” Tommy’s feathers puffed up under Techno’s jacket.

“Then just say it. If I am a prince, that makes Techno...” Siren trailed off, staring at Tommy with glee.

“A pissy bastard who ties kids up for fun.” Tommy shot back. His heart picked up in speed, and Tommy wished he could just *run away now*. He didn’t like this. Because if- if that was true then-

No!

There was no feasible way that it was the truth.

Tommy *knew* Techno. He might have lied and tricked Tommy into imprinting on him, but Tommy was a fucking good judge of character. There was no way that Techno could keep up a lie for months against Tommy’s suspicious nature. Tommy would have known if Techno was-

-but it made sense, didn’t it?

Techno told stories. He read that stupid French book out loud and translated it for Tommy to understand. He liked pine trees more than stupid oak trees because they smelled better. He sharpened the axe every two days because he liked the feeling of it. And he and Tommy agreed that potatoes are the best vegetable because they are so versatile. There is *absolutely no way* that Techno was-

Prime, it made sense though.

The missing puzzle pieces that hid the bigger picture finally were clicking into place. And Tommy could only mutely turn his head to stare at Techno, hoping that he would just *deny* it. Because it couldn’t be true. It was-

Techno tilted his head, “I am the Blood God, Theseus.”

Tommy’s world came crashing down again.

A half an hour prior, Wilbur leaned up against the side of the limousine, and smoked a cigarette. He could feel the judgmental look that Eret was giving him. They didn’t even have eyes, and yet they were boring into the side of Wilbur’s head.

Without a doubt, Phil would confiscate all of Wilbur’s cigs next time he saw them. But Wilbur wasn’t too concerned with that, instead he simply dragged another breath and let the smoke fall from his lips. It curled down his chin as he blew it out, his eyes scanning the horizon. Where were they?

Techno seemed to know where he was going, and had told Wilbur the instructions on where to meet. Wilbur wasn’t the one driving, so he just told Eret where to go. But standing out in the middle of nowhere, at a nameless pitstop that only had a public restroom, wasn’t exactly what Wilbur had thought it was going to be. He had thought Techno would just walk in one

day, with that deadpan look and a quip on his tongue. Instead, Wilbur was standing out in the cold with Eret's hard look, staring at nothing.

This was a really shitty reunion.

If Phil was here, he'd be high up in the air. He'd swoop down the second he saw Techno, and snatch him up. But Techno had implicitly instructed Wilbur *not* to let Phil know. The absolute bullshit Wilbur had to say in order to get his father off his back to even meet up with Techno was a hassle.

Techno should be here by now.

Wilbur was impatient. The cigarette was a temporary relief, but it still wasn't enough. His leg jumped, and finally the cig crumpled up into ash, leaving nothing but a stump behind. He flicked it to the ground, and Eret sighed behind him.

There was a soft jingle. Wilbur glanced up and he saw a shape move out of the forest. Techno, on a fucking horse. Of course. Leave it to Techno to find a damned horse in the middle of nowhere. But the sight of his brother, even when he was wearing ugly ass clothes, made the ache in his heart lessen slightly.

And then Wilbur caught sight of the kid. Blonde hair obscured most of his face, but angry blue eyes glaring out at everything caught Wilbur's attention. The kid's wrists and legs were tied up, and a large coat hung over his frame.

Wilbur, to be honest, dismissed him from the start. Techno was the one who picked up Phil's annoying habit of bringing home strays. Ranboo was one of them, the kid stumbling around and nervously stuttering. It had taken a few years before Wilbur could confidently say that he liked Ranboo.

This was just another kid, another new pet to distract Techno from his *real* family. The ones who had been worried sick about Techno for the past few months, and yet his brother didn't care. Technoblade was living in his own world, ignoring the fact that Wilbur and Phil had been suffering in his absence.

Okay, maybe Wilbur was feeling a bit vindictive that this kid was the reason why Techno stayed away. He knew Techno well enough that is what probably happened. More than likely, Techno saw the kid and decided to befriend him first before dragging him all the way back to the castle.

Of course, that assumption was quickly thrown down the drain as soon as the kid opened his mouth.

Wilbur was *delighted*.

This kid, Theseus, was a far cry from the anxious wreck of Ranboo. Spitting fire and insults like they were going out of business, Theseus was a raging ball of anger. Mostly directed at Techno, which warmed the dark pits of Wilbur's heart. Techno was keeping a straight face,

but Wilbur knew his tells. Techno was unhappy that Theseus was staring at him with murder in his eyes.

It was even more wonderful to see that little bridge of trust built between the two crumble as Techno admitted to Theseus his identity.

The devastation in those blue eyes made Wilbur's fingers itch to swoop him into his arms. Yes, that would be entertaining. To steal the kid from Techno, after he spent months with him. A fitting punishment as well, now that Wilbur thought about it. The idea of having the kid follow *him* instead of Techno, was simply too good.

Wilbur was ready for the tears. Theseus blinked rapidly, staring at Techno with utter betrayal. His blue eyes were watering. But the kid was trying to keep a stiff upper lip. Wilbur also expected another attempt to get out of Techno's arms, ready to take the kid from the *big bad mean Technoblade*. Wilbur will be his hero, just for a moment.

Instead Theseus let out a little distressed 'peep,' and buried his face into Techno's shirt. His bound wrists twisting so his fingers curled into the cloth. Techno pulled him closer into his arms, "enough games, Wilbur. Let's leave." His brother pushed past Wilbur, opening the door to the limo and ducking in.

Wilbur stood outside, blinking rapidly. Then a real smile tugged on the corner of his mouth, and he turned to the car.

How interesting.

Wilbur slid into the limo after them, and just watched. Techno kept the kid on his lap, a hand curling around Theseus' waist. Techno would glance around, before returning his gaze back to the kid. Theseus buried his face into Techno's chest, and Techno curled his arms around him possessively. What was it that Techno had said on the phone call? A brother?

Damn, Techno imprinted on the kid.

Wilbur itched to grab his phone and text Phil about it. And speaking of, why exactly did Techno not want Phil to be here? Specifically Philza. If it was a matter that involved family, Techno would have wanted their dad to be there when he showed Theseus off. So what was he trying to hide?

Eret slid behind the wheel and the car started. They pulled out of the parking lot and onto the road, and nobody spoke.

Techno's eyes met Wilbur's, and the corner of his brother's lip jerked upwards. "Wilbur." That was Techno's 'I'm about to win this game' face.

"Technoblade." Wilbur said, a bit wary.

Without breaking eye contact, Techno gently slid the oversized coat off of the kid.

The light caught on the feathers of two small wings, and Wilbur nearly choked on his own breath. The coat slid downwards, revealing more and more precious gold. The feathers

looked light and airy, although it was clear that it was a recent development. The wear and tear on some of the feathers spoke about their treatment, along with the lack of oily shine that their father had on his wings. They would *gleam* once they were oiled, even more than they were now.

Theseus was shivering, pushing himself further into Techno's hold. As if to hide those precious wings that were exposed. There was a rope holding them, and Wilbur wanted to reach up and free the wings, pulling them out to see how much *gold there was*. Theseus made a distressed peeping noise again, and Techno purred trying to calm the kid down.

But Wilbur wasn't hearing anything- his mind suddenly focused on the stunningly beautiful scene in front of him. His fingers itched to get at the feathers. To dig into the fluff and feel the gold with his own hands.

Wilbur leaned forwards, and Techno snorted.

The elder brother's eyes jerked up, and Techno stared Wilbur down. *Mine*. The look said, *don't touch*.

A part of Wilbur growled at that. Wanted to challenge Techno. But another part of him understood that this was not the time and place to do so, and Techno was family. The fact that Techno even trusted him, to show him his *gold* then that meant something. Theseus will be Wilbur's, just as much as he is Techno's.

Eventually.

But for now, Techno made his claim clear. As much as it killed Wilbur to leave it be, he did. The niggling itch of taking the gold away was strong, but Wilbur was the smart one. He'll bide his time. When Techno wasn't looking is when Wilbur will strike.

"Dad is going to kill him." Wilbur said, as the thought crossed his mind. "No wonder you said not to tell him." The words sounded hollow to his own ears, most of his attention was still on Theseus.

Techno nodded, pulling Theseus closer to him on his lap, making the boy hiss slightly at him. "Figured we might have to hide Theseus until Phil accepts him as part of the pack."

"Hmmm. Maybe ruffle the kids feathers, pinch his cheeks a bit, and get him to cry." Wilbur pointed at Theseus, "Dad will mother hen him until he accidentally adopts him."

"I don't want to take that risk."

Wilbur rolled his eyes, "what's the worst that could happen? Phil wouldn't hurt him. He's been on top of his instincts for decades, he wouldn't just fly into a blind rage."

Techno only held the kid tighter against him. The car moved as it turned. Theseus swayed with the motion, and Wilbur's eyes couldn't help but be drawn to the glittering feathers. A songbird avian. His fingers itched to touch the gold. Theseus slowly blinked, his blue eyes staring at nothing.

“What a cute little kid, Techno.” Wilbur muttered, but Theseus heard him.

Theseus spluttered, his whole body tensing up in rage. Wilbur could see him on the cusp of attacking when Techno’s hand reached up and petted one golden wing. The boy melted with the touch, a shy little chirp escaping from his lips as he leaned into Techno.

Fuck.

Wilbur wanted to do that *right now*.

He could see Techno eyeing him up, and Wilbur had to rub his fingers together to prevent himself from making grabby hands. Damn it. Theseus was *adorable*. A spitfire with no verbal boundaries, yes, but a cute one. And Techno knew very well that was Wilbur’s weakness.

Another tiny chirp filled the air, and Theseus buried his face into Techno’s shoulder again. Wilbur jerked at the sound, and he could feel the sudden pressing need to gather the kid into his arms. But one look from Techno kept him in his seat.

“So while Phil and I were stressing the fuck out, you were playing house with a songbird avian?” Wilbur pouted. Fucking hell, Wilbur wished *he* had been the one in a cabin with the kid. Having his sole attention for a few months, with those little chirping noises-

Wait a second.

“Did you get him to imprint on you?” Wilbur asked, wide eyed. Theseus made a grumbling hissing noise, and Techno chuffed until he settled down. “Are you a part of his flock?”

Techno’s sadistic grin was all the answer needed for Wilbur.

Wilbur laughed breathlessly, “no fucking way. No way!” He couldn’t help himself, he was on the edge of his seat, leaning forwards. “Can I hold him? Please? It’s my turn. I want the kid, please Techno. I gotta start somewhere.”

Making an avian see you as a part of their flock was *hard*. It was difficult for Phil to imprint on Wilbur and Techno when they were kids, and that was when he was *trying*. But once they were a part of their flock, nothing could reverse it. It was for life. And somehow Techno got the kid to bond with him.

Wilbur *wanted it too*. It curled around his selfish heart. The thought of the kid curling into his arms, chirping and peeping just like he was in Techno’s, made Wilbur almost faint with it. The little baby wrapped up and in his den, with his golden hair and wings- staring up at Wilbur as if he was his whole world. *Yes*.

Techno hummed and the kid chirped out his distress at Wilbur’s words. “No.” Techno said, “not now.”

“But-”

Techno growled deep, and Wilbur froze.

And slowly, Wilbur sank into his seat. Crossing his arms and pouting. It wasn't fair! Techno had the last *five* months with Theseus. And Wilbur wanted to hold him too! His eyes were firmly stuck on the gold. Theseus was burrowed into his brother's side, and Wilbur wanted to shake Techno and tell him it was *his turn to hold the baby*.

Fine. Techno will regret this.

Wilbur will set Phil on Techno. Once they smuggle Theseus into the castle, hidden and safe, Wilbur could prod Phil a little bit to throw Techno into his nest. If Techno protested, the longer he would stay under Phil's protective eye. Meaning Wilbur could have the little songbird all to himself for *days*. With enough time Wilbur could lower the boy into his instincts and it would be simple to show him that Wilbur was a good provider.

If Wilbur was persistent enough, he could have Theseus chirping at him in two, maybe three weeks. With Techno there, it could be shortened even further.

But with how selfish Techno was being, Wilbur would prefer the other way. That way he could have the kid all to himself for even *longer*. Lets see how smug Techno will be when Wilbur finally allows him to see the kid only to find him chirping at Wilbur.

"Haven't you heard that sharing is caring?" Wilbur said, picking at his nails.

Techno replied, "how about you get abducted and held against your will for five months."

The two of them stared, challenging each other. Wilbur might be the lowest in the hierarchy of their family, but he could still whoop his younger brother any day. All it would take is a couple of words, and the songbird avian could be in his arms. Techno knew this. But Wilbur is the older brother, after all.

Techno's ear flicked, "you can hold him when we stop at a gas station. But only when I'm gone."

Wilbur broke into a wide grin. *Yes*. "Thanks."

"Or, how about I kill you both!" Theseus hissed, staring daggers at the two of them. Speaking up for the first time in the conversation. "Then nobody gets to do shit!"

"Hush." Techno said, and pulled Theseus back into his arms.

Wilbur was amused, "he is a little spitfire, isn't he?"

Okay well. Getting out of the car might be a bust too. At least, with both of them inside of it.

Tommy had to deal with Siren, no, Wilbur because he doesn't deserve to be called by his fucking villain name when he's wearing ripped jeans, cooing at him for the past *two* hours. The only comfort Tommy could find was that Techno wasn't going to let him go. Which was fucking wild because Techno was *the Blood God*.

The more death he created, the more powerful the Blood God became. The blood of the fallen would be his, under his control, as he wiped cities out in hours. Tommy had seen the videos, found on the dark web. Of a hulking man wearing a crown (hell, that should have been the first sign when Tommy stripped Techno of the same *fucking crown* when he kidnapped him), with a sea of dark red liquid following him as he killed mercilessly. The video ended soon after, the owner having perished to the Blood God's endless thirst for more.

Hey, Tommy thinks what actually happened to make him pass out in the cabin now. Techno *cheated*. Asshole.

Techno, even with his lies and secrets, was still better than the maniac that kept eyeing Tommy like he was a new toy. Even when Tommy froze up, helpless in his fear to clutch at the man who made him feel that way, was better than *Wilbur*.

Except now they were at the gas station. And Wilbur was bouncing in his seat. And Techno pried Tommy off of him while he went to go into the shitty store inside.

The car door shut as Techno left, leaving Tommy in the limo with the fucker. If Tommy wasn't already reeling from being backstabbed about seven times in the last two days, he would take this as yet another betrayal. Wilbur clearly wanted Tommy alone, and the stare the theater kid was giving him was full of dark delight.

"Well, now that we are alone, why don't you come here, Theseus?" Tommy frowned at the name, only Techno could call him that. Instead he glared at Wilbur. "Oh, don't be like that," Wilbur pouted, his voice heavy with sympathy, "come here, I promise I only want a cuddle. I won't touch your pretty little wings."

What a psychopath.

Tommy glared at him and firmly stayed on the seat, flicking his middle fingers up at Wilbur. The very last thing he wanted to do was get closer to the creep. Wilbur obviously didn't get the memo as he crossed the back of the limo to sit next to Tommy.

"You're pretty funny," Wilbur leaned into Tommy's space. "And you're putting up a good act too. Being all tough. It's okay to be afraid. It's not every day you're locked in a car with a villain like me."

God what a D-rank villain move.

Tommy rolled his eyes and said, "have you considered," the rope fell from his wrists and onto the floor with a thump, "that you're locked in this car with *me*?"

And then Tommy punched Wilbur in the throat.

Wilbur choked, his voice coming out garbled. Tommy easily caught the hand that reached for him, and his fingers snapped out, pressing deep into Wilbur's pressure points. One arm down, falling limp against Wilbur's side. Tommy didn't pause, punching Wilbur's other arm and legs until the villain was slumped over like a doll.

Tommy's hands reached and plucked at the rope around his legs. They came undone with a few tugs. He had plenty of time to study them after all, and once he was finally done he turned to the gasping villain next to him. "You should tone down the ego," Tommy said absentmindedly, as he ran his hands up and down Wilbur's coat. Expertly picking things from the pockets. "A bit of helpful advice, from one guy to the next. Also- your monologuing? Pretty cliché, if you ask me."

Tommy found the wallet in Wilbur's pocket, and rifled through it's contents. Hey, there was a decently sized bit of cash in it. He pocketed it, and noticed the angry glare from Wilbur. He laughed, "come on, you didn't think Techno would just pick up any random orphan, did you? Bitch please, I'm the one who fucking stole him in the first place." Wilbur's angry face morphed, darkening with utter rage. Tommy tapped him gently with his own wallet, mockingly. "I don't know why Techno didn't want to tell you that. And speaking of which, I gotta skedaddle. I'd say it was nice meeting you, but this was pretty shitty. See you never."

Tommy slid out of the car, on the side that wasn't facing the gas station. He kept low, creeping past several cars and darting towards the woods.

The good thing was that Tommy knew what he was facing now. The heart attack of knowing who Technoblade was still made a hysterical part of his mind screech in panic. *The Blood God*. Tommy resolutely never *touched* any villain on the most wanted top ten lists, and the Blood God was literally number three. And the fact that Tommy had just left Siren behind him, number six on the list, after stealing all of his cash... his stomach churned uneasily.

Making enemies was somehow a special talent of Tommy's. He didn't even *try*. They just sort of happened.

But thankfully, there were records. People studied Techno's techniques, and his list of attributes were well known. Any kid who had a hero obsession knew the top ten villains by heart- it came with the package. And Tommy was an impressionable kid, even living on the streets. So he knew exactly what Techno could *do*.

It made it easy to figure out what he had to do next.

Tommy had to *get the fuck out*.

Idly he had thought maybe kicking Techno into next week would work. But Techno's powers had a range to them. Blood manipulation was fucking scary, and with a twitch of Techno's fingers could make Tommy pass out. So Tommy had to just *leave*. Get out of dodge.

Tommy emerged from the other side of the trees, already his eyes flicking around to find the best possible path. They were on the outskirts of the city, not quite yet civilization and not forest. He had two options, continue the forest route or with civilization.

He blinked and Saw-

"-come out you can't hide forever, Theseus." An angry growl made the air quake-

-Tommy hiding his breath from behind a tree-

-cawing black bird-

-a cry as a hand grabbed him, his wings fluttering uselessly as an arrow hung heavily in one-

Tommy blinked, okay. Going into the woods and flying out wasn't the way to go. It would end badly, so that meant-

A guttural roar cut through the air behind Tommy and his heart leapt and kickstarted him into running away again. It had only been a few minutes. Shit, he thought he had another two-maybe three, before Techno found out.

Tommy didn't know if he was outside of Techno's range yet. His feet pounded on the sidewalk as he dodged down into an alleyway. The more twists and turns, the greater the amount of buildings between him and Techno, would help. There wasn't enough time for him to pause to see another in-depth vision, Tommy could only blink rapidly, his eyes watering from the strain.

It hurts to See with a specific goal in mind: getting away. It took more energy, and that's why Tommy always took his time and narrowed the paths down gradually instead of bombarding his brain with images.

-dodge right-

Tommy went right.

-coat in garbage-

His hand plunged into the can and pulled out a ratty coat that had some kind of stinky goo in it. Pulling it on, his wings barely fitting underneath it.

-rattle of a fire escape-

Tommy leapt, and pulled himself up the rusty metal. His arms ached and he was out of breath. Shit, he should have exercised more in the last few months instead of sitting around doing nothing with *the Blood God*.

Two streets over, he heard a blood curdling howl. The noise was more of an animalistic scream than a word and it took Tommy a second to understand what it was. "*Theseus*."

The bird and Tommy flinched at the same time. His limbs locking for a brief moment.

And then Tommy snapped himself out, and climbed up further. Hitting the top, and easily making his way to the roof. He blinked- tears starting to stream down his cheeks and-

-jumping over to the next building-

Tommy leapt. Falling and busting his knees against the gravel roof, he could feel bits of rock embedding into his skin. But that was an afterthought- he pushed onwards. Deeper into the town. Making sudden strange turns or double backing on himself, even though going *closer*

scared him out of his mind he still did it. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed. And Tommy was still going.

The worst thing about this was that Tommy didn't know where Techno was.

Normally Tommy could keep track of exactly where his pursuers were and how far behind they were. Dream Team were always shouting and throwing around words, crashing into things and breaking buildings. Classical Hero stuff. But Techno was silent. Stalking him. And Tommy hadn't heard another noise behind him again.

He wasn't stupid enough to think he was far away yet.

Tommy wouldn't be safe until he was out of this forsaken country.

-the slide of metal on the ground, Tommy covered in darkness with only a small light above him-

Tommy dove for the manhole cover. The iron disk was meant to be moved with tools, and Tommy struggled to pull it with his fingers hooking into it. Once it opened to the darkness, Tommy dropped in, his sneaker pressing uncomfortably against the metal rung. And then Tommy drew the manhole cover back above his head.

-covering his ears-

Tommy slapped his hands over his ears, muffling the sound of rushing sewage underneath him. He didn't move, still clinging to the ladder, and all he could hear was the sound of his uneven breaths and beating heart.

Then there was a soft little song curling around his hands. Tommy could barely make it out. But it was... pretty. He stopped breathing to hear it better.

"Come out, little sweet." The words were barely there, and Tommy jerked slightly. *"Come, step out from the shadows and into our arms. We will adore you, little Theseus. Be ours. Fall into our embrace, sweetheart."* A soft cord from a guitar, and there was this sudden urge to just-

-just go.

He forgot. He forgot where he was and what he was doing. Because that beautiful music was calling to him, *speaking* to him. And Tommy had to *leave*. He swayed on the ladder, blinking sluggishly as he gazed upwards to where he had to go. Strong arms. Techno's arms. He had to fall into them-

Tommy let his breath out, and suddenly it snapped it out of his trance. His legs and arms ached, his lungs burned fiercely, and his head pounded after using his powers so quickly. The pain helped. It helped him a lot, actually. Grounding him into the moment, and not in that lazy disassociating mindset the music dragged him into. He pressed his fingers tighter into his ears, until the only thing he could hear was his ragged breathing.

Fucking Siren.

Yeah, okay. So Tommy should have thought about that earlier. Siren would join in the hunt too, because well... Tommy did just punch him. It made sense he'd want some kind of revenge. The thought of what Siren would do against Tommy made him shudder, there would be blood for certain.

Normally, Tommy found a high in getting chased. The thrill of always getting away, of being two steps ahead of his pursuers, was exhilarating. Maybe that was why Tommy always let Dream "catch" him in the act and always slipping away victoriously. But this moment was giving Tommy a horrible sinking feeling in his gut.

They weren't going to leave him after this, would they?

Tommy had never actually been afraid that his actions would catch up to him. Confidence always guided his step. But now...

Tommy was legitimately terrified of what came after this.

Eventually Tommy slid down the ladder, his feet were about to give up on him, and he found a ledge overlooking the water in the drains. He didn't take his fingers out of his ears once, curling up into a little ball and shaking.

He blinked once-

- *safety* -

And collapsed.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy: runs away

Techno and Wilbur: shocked Pikachu face

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Thank you to the wonderful HoneyDew_Tea author of Orange Light (Painted by the Morning Sun) for betaing this chapter for me. I physically could not make myself edit this monster.

HEY THERE ARE SOME WARNING FOR THIS CHAPTER:

Possessive Behavior

Non-Con touching/drugging (does Wilbur's power count as a drug, because if so, then yes)

Being held against their will

Graphic Descriptions of Corpses and Violence

general dark stuff ahead

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur skipped across the pavement, idly looking around and sticking his hands in his pockets. In front of him, a dozen feet away, Techno was tearing the street apart. Wilbur let out a hum, watching the shit show as his brother lost himself to his instincts.

It was impressive, Wilbur had to begrudgingly admit it, that the kid managed to get away. The fact that Techno hadn't already set off like a hound after a limping doe, was enough of a clue that Techno couldn't sense him anymore.

After all, how long did Techno get to be around the kid? Months. That was more than enough time for Techno to learn and recognize his blood. Wilbur couldn't really wrap his head around it, blood was blood after all. But he had spent enough afternoons arguing with Techno who claimed he could sense the difference of every individual "ichor" a person had.

Yeah, that was the exact word Technoblade used.

Well, this is getting boring now. And Wilbur was fucking pissed. He tried his own hand at bringing the kid in with his siren's song, but the chances of Theseus hearing was low when he could fly off with those pretty golden wings of his. Not that Wilbur would have let Techno have his kid again, Wilbur wanted to gut him.

The knife Wilbur held in his pocket was warm and heavy in his hand. Theseus might have been his brother's new pet, but Wilbur wasn't going to allow it. He was the reason why Wilbur and Phil had *suffered* the last few months.

The boy would die.

No matter what Techno has to say about it.

Techno would get over it. Eventually.

“*Techno*,” he hummed out, the single note echoing and vibrating in the air. His brother hardly twitched at the sound of his name. “*Techno, look at me.*”

With great hesitance, Techno did so. Wilbur could see the instincts warring within his brother, could see how he was trying to resist Wilbur. But he couldn’t fight the inevitable. “*Come with me, Tech. We need to go.*” He pulled a hand out of his pocket and curled a finger towards him, beckoning Techno close.

A growl escaped Techno, deep and thunderous. A protest.

“It’s been fun. But Theseus is not here anymore. We’ll find him. I promise, there isn’t a way for him to hide from the Syndicate. But you have other obligations you need to think of first, Technoblade.” Wilbur’s voice dropped from his amused tone to a serious, more threatening tone. “Dad is going to lose his head. We’ve been worried sick about you. You are going to go home with me, and we can find your lost bird another time.”

Technoblade seethed. A hand twitching for a weapon. But Wilbur wasn’t having it. What little patience he had was gone. “*Calm down, relax.*” Techno did not, in fact, relax. He shook his head, trying to fight it. He bared his teeth at Wilbur and took a shaking step towards him. Wilbur let out a long sigh, “okay, I didn’t want to do this but *sleep.*”

Techno dropped like a stone.

Besides Techno flicking his ear in annoyance, he didn’t move. He hadn’t since he woke up. Staring down Wilbur with the force of his wrath. The two stared at each other, unblinking. The contest was silently issued, and neither of them was going to lose.

Wilbur blinked first. And Techno narrowed his eyes, a low rumble coming from his chest. “Let me *go.*”

“No.” Wilbur crossed his arms.

“Wilbur.”

“No. I said *no.*” Wilbur snapped, “that is my final answer.”

Techno uncrossed his arms, the chains rattling with the motion. He would stand up and tower over Wilbur in an effort to intimidate him. He itched to wrestle Wilbur into the floor to make the point that Techno was above him in the pack hierarchy. But the chains were attached to the wall in Phil’s nest, and Techno barely had any room to move.

“Wilbur, you’re being an idiot. Let me go.”

Techno had to save his runt. Had to find him. Theseus was out *there* in the cold and dark, with nothing, and Techno would still be out there hunting him down if Wilbur hadn’t taken

him back to the castle against his will. Damn his brother with his musical brainwashing powers. Theseus could be hurt, dying in a ditch right now. And Techno was sitting in Phil's nest with rich blankets and plump pillows.

"And what? Let you run out in the streets searching until you pass out?" Wilbur shot back, "no I think I'll wait for Phil to get back. I think we need to have a family reunion."

"But-

"*Shut up, Techno.*" Wilbur hummed, and after a few seconds, relaxed. "There. That's better. You can stop glaring at me. Nothing you do will change my mind. Once Phil gets here, we are going to have a *long* discussion about how you were in cahoots with your own kidnapper." Wilbur spat the word out with vitriol.

Glancing over, he gave Techno an unhinged smile. "Oh, you didn't know I figured it out? Your lovely bird told me when he was stealing my wallet." Wilbur's voice dipped low to mimic Theseus' voice. "'I'm the one who stole Techno in the first place.'"

Techno let out a grunt.

"Don't you grunt at me!" Wilbur hissed, pointing a finger at his twin. "You knew! You were bringing back the guy who kept you away from us. And you didn't inform me of that? We have spent the last few months going out of our minds with worry and you don't care." Wilbur gave Techno a nasty smile, "but you will care. When I kill the kid in front of you."

Techno snorted, baring his teeth to Wilbur. Daring him. Wilbur grinned, reaching over and grabbing his brother by the chin. "Techno, I will have so much fun with Theseus. I'll let you watch. It'll be family bonding time." Wilbur's tail came up and wrapped around Techno's cuffed wrist, "I can't wait to rip his little wings off of him." He hushed Techno, "don't worry, I'll take it real slow. So you can understand how much pain we have felt in your absence. Afterward, we can call it even. Okay?"

"Wil-" Techno gasped out, fighting the order. Wilbur leaned more into Techno, gently humming. Pulling his brother down further into his grasp. He let out a gentle hum and watched as Techno sank further into his power. His eyes glazed over.

"Don't fight it, Tech. This is what you get." Wilbur purred, his hand reaching up and gently pulling Techno's hair. Releasing the ugly braids from their hold, and combing his fingers through the pink locks. "For being so mean to us Tech. Five months. Five whole months away from us without a word. You don't think you'll get punished for it?" Wilbur plucked out every golden feather, making sure to get every last one out. "I have to admit, the kid was cute at first. But I think you got too attached too quickly."

Techno sank into Wilbur's grasp with a wordless sigh, and Wilbur purred happily. He rarely pulled Techno down like this, he always got so pissy afterwards that Wilbur didn't want to deal with the headache. But right now, seeing his brother slack in the nest, made Wilbur hum with satisfaction. "Should have been here with *us*. But instead, you didn't come back home. But you'll see, Techno. That Phil and I are everything you ever wanted. You don't need anything more than us. Okay? Everything will go back to the way things were." He muttered

into Techno's hairline, before pressing a closed mouth kiss to his forehead. "Everything will be *perfect* again."

The door opened. And Wilbur turned with a grin, "hey dad. Look who came back."

Phil stood in the doorway, illuminated by the light behind him. There was a clatter as Phil dropped whatever he was holding. "Techno." The word was broken and full of hope. And then Phil was suddenly with them in the nest. Curling his wings around the two of them. His blue eyes flicked over Techno with concern, and Techno let out a content rumble as his father leaned over him. His head lolling back into Wilbur's grip.

"Wilbur, what is going on? Why is-"

"Yeah, Techno." Wilbur gently tugged on Techno's hair. But his voice had a hard edge to it. "What is going on?" He eased up on his power, giving Techno a second to get his bearings, before pressing his will onto Techno. *Speak. Apologize.*

"S'rry." Techno slurred, tilted his head to Phil. Exposing his neck in submission. "I'm s'rry."

"Wil?" Phil reached up and gripped Techno to stop him from falling over.

"Go on, Tech. Tell Dad why you've been gone for so long." Wilbur yanked a bit harder on Techno's hair.

"I've been... getting a kid. To imprint. On me." Techno stumbled over the words. "Wanted my r'nt."

"What?" Phil seemed baffled by it. His brows furrowed in confusion, "you have a runt?"

Wilbur leaned over and picked up a golden feather. Holding it up in the dim light, it still gleamed. "Guess what Phil." Wilbur said brightly, "Techno found a little birdy. He was trying to replace us."

Techno let out a low whine, "no... I wasn't. I was-"

Wilbur gently shushed him, "yes you were. Leaving us for *months* while playing family with somebody else? What do you take us for, Techno? Fools?"

Phil reached out a taloned hand and plucked the feather from Wilbur's grasp. Holding it in the light, staring down at it blankly. "Mate, is this true?"

Techno let out another whine, leaning into Wilbur's touch. But he sluggishly nodded. Wilbur leaned back against the cushions in the nest, his grin getting wider as Phil tilted his head until it was hidden by his hair. His fingers twirled the feather around, tightening on it slowly.

The shadows in the room pulsed. Stretching up the walls, curling up and around the nest like a hand closing its fingers slowly around them all. The lights flickered ominously, and Techno gave a soft whine. "S'rry."

Phil's wrath was not appeased by this. Even as Phil reached out a hand and gently pulled Techno into his grip, the shadows continued to lash out. Phil tucked Techno's head under his chin, "I forgive you, Techno." He said lightly. "I know it must've been so hard. I know you don't make these kinds of decisions lightly. I trust you so much Techno." His talons gently brushed through Techno's loose hair.

"Please-" Techno slurred against his throat.

"But I am your father, Technoblade." Phil said coldly, "and sometimes I need to guide you away from making mistakes. And I think this is one of them."

"No-"

Wilbur reached up and placed his hand over Techno's mouth. "Shhh," Wilbur shushed him quietly, "we know what is best for you. It might take a little bit for the imprint to break, but we'll be here for you. Every step of the way."

Phil's feathers rustled ominously and his taloned hands reached up to grab Techno's chin, replacing Wilbur's touch. He turned Techno's head so that their eyes met, "you are not going to leave this nest, Techno. Until the kid is dead. I promise we're doing this in your best interest. You're ours. *And nobody can take you away from us again.* "

Techno shuddered.

The streets were full, and nobody noticed Wilbur in the middle of the crowd. His people, his *citizens*, were unaware that a member of the Syndicate was walking with them as they made their morning commute. It was one of the things that Wilbur had missed desperately while he was locked in the castle with his father. Being one of the people. It was with a bright smile as he sipped from a cup of coffee that he bought from his favorite café, a guitar slung around his back and a skip in his step.

With Techno back and in Phil's nest, Wilbur was *free*. Last he saw Phil was crooning over Techno, who was sulking. Boo fucking hoo. Wilbur had no pity for his brother's actions. Thank Prime it wasn't Wilbur in that nest anymore.

Don't get him wrong, he loved his father. But spending a few months trapped in that nest was simply too much.

He left the castle early in the morning, free from the sea of guards trailing after him under Phil's orders. Nor had he been stopped three separate times by Phil's worried, "I really don't feel comfortable with you leaving, but if you *really have to* I'll allow it." Wilbur had been able to get into one of his cheaper vehicles and drove off, without any hassle or grief.

It was euphoric.

With one hand deep into his pocket, and the other holding a cup of coffee, Wilbur hummed happily. He was out and about, without any prying eyes on him. He was knee-deep in the Empire, and nobody was watching him like he was a naughty kid.

A smile twitched onto his lips as he took a sip. The naughty kid title has been passed to his younger brother. Maybe Wilbur could get him a trophy congratulating him for being the fuck up of the family now.

A sharp screech filled the air, and then a painful solid crunch followed it. Wilbur whipped his head around and saw a car had driven itself into one of the barriers on the side of the road. The front was crumpled up and the driver stumbled out of the car with wide eyes and shaking legs.

Distracted, Wilbur didn't notice the person in front of him as he walked forwards. His shoulder slammed into the woman, and he fumbled with his coffee cup as it threatened to slip from his fingers.

"Watch where you're going, fuck face." The woman spat at him, her long brunette hair whipping around her as she glared at him with frosty blue eyes.

"Sorry." Wilbur instinctively replied back, but the woman didn't stop, she kept walking away. "Sheesh. Some people." He muttered to himself, his eyes trailing back to the accident. There were several people surrounding the car now, and the driver was shakily speaking to someone.

Idly, Wilbur sipped at his coffee again, and couldn't help the small smile on his face. He missed being out like this. Rude women and car accidents included.

It wasn't until later he realized he was missing his hat.

The sound of laughter in the castle was not uncommon, per se. But it was still rare enough that it was not coming from the officials, but rather the guards. Eret slowed his purposeful walk, walking out of the castle with curiosity. Outside, by the gates, a group of guards was standing in a circle.

It wasn't allowed, of course. The royal family was particular about those who were on the job not being at their posts. But it was a rare sight to see the men talking and having a good conversation, that Eret didn't want to interrupt.

Still, they approached the men. Some of the guards noticed his approach and stiffened, but Eret gave them a polite nod, "at ease." And they relaxed again.

"Sorry Commander," one of the men said, he was an older recruit who had maybe three months left on his service to the Empire. "Got caught up with the kid here."

Sure enough, there was a teenager talking cheerfully with them. Wearing a thick bulky jacket, lanky, and in the middle of puberty. He had shaggy brown hair that fell around the kid's ears, and he wore a beaten-up old backpack. This was no place for a kid to randomly waltz up to, and yet it looked like he was on a field trip.

"What is going on?" Eret asked.

“He wanted to ask us a few questions about working in the castle. Nothing too bad, he’s approaching the age for the conscription and was wondering what it’ll be like.” The guard said, “I remember when I was that age. It terrified me knowing that I had to go into the army. He’s smart to be asking questions.”

Eret nodded, looking the kid up and down.

“-and then he had his sword up against my neck and told me to ‘stand up straighter.’” One of the men said, and the group of guards laughed. “What? I’m not kidding.”

“Blood God always does that.” One guy said, rolling his eyes. “It’s Siren you ought to look out for. I swear I saw him staring at me in the dark once. The best bet, kid, is to just avoid looking at them entirely. If you don’t look at them, they won’t find some excuse to pull you into their bullshit.”

“That reminds me of how Angel made us all shine the buttons on our uniform until they gleamed.” One man shook his head, “I spent three hours on four buttons until he said I could go.”

“They might be intimidating as hell, kid. But the three of them are softies deep inside. Just don’t break any rules near them.”

“Wow. I didn’t know that they were so chill.” The kid bounced on his heels. “I kind of thought they were really strict. You guys are so cool to work here.”

“They are sometimes. But for the most part, they know this is our job, and they leave us alone. Although boot camp is absolute hell with Blood God running it.”

Eret stepped forward. “I think it’s time to go back to your places,” they addressed them all. And then they turned to the kid, “It’s lovely to see the youth today trying to stay informed. But I think it is best that you leave.” They reached out and gave the kid a handshake.

All they felt was nervous energy and excitement. Nothing malicious. It was just a kid.

“What is your name?” Eret asked, giving the kid a polite smile.

“Toby.”

“Well, Toby. I hope you have a good day. We might see you here when you are enlisted. Good luck.”

“Thanks!” Toby said with a smile, before getting ushered out by a few guards. Eret gave him a polite smile, before turning to go on their way. They hardly made it a few steps when their phone buzzed in their pocket.

It was a picture of a blonde kid, facing away from the camera. A large oversized jacket with worn holes covering his thin frame. His face was turned away from the camera, but it was clear by the glinting gold from a hole in the jacket, who exactly this was.

Eret turned and went back inside the castle.

They didn't see the kid double back.

Being in the nest was cool and all, but after a solid week of his father hovering over him Techno could officially say, he was done. He had just spent *five months* in a tiny box cabin with practically nothing to do, and being chained and sitting here kind of sucked. Phil and Wilbur didn't leave him alone.

Phil was doing paperwork at his desk, while Wilbur gently strummed his guitar. They gave Techno his books, which was nice. But anxiety and restlessness were sinking deep into his bones. He needed to move. Needed something to distract himself. He could only think about Theseus.

Was he alright? Was he cold? He needed to be *safe*. But a part of Techno was immensely glad that Theseus was at least smart enough to keep low. No doubt their people were scouring the streets, looking for him. The longer he was out there, away from Techno, the safer he was. Even though it killed Techno to admit it.

He needed to get Wilbur to warm up to the idea. And then they could keep Phil away from Theseus long enough then everything would work out. He just needed a second alone with Wil.

Chat roared in his ears. *Why has our family abandoned us so? F.f in chat. oh wilbur looks mad. We need to BAIL. we can't idiot, we're chained up. Oh. TechnoHulk! Break the chains!! Save baby!! SAVE BABY BIRB.*

They began to chant 'save the birb,' over and over again.

Techno ignored Chat, instead focusing on Wilbur and poking him with a socked foot. "Hey, what happened while I was gone." Prime, he was bored.

Wilbur gave him a deadpan look, "don't get me started."

"It's not like I missed much. What was the worst thing that could happen while I was gone?" Techno shrugged. "It's not like the--"

"The key to the apocalypse room has been stolen," Phil said lightly as if the words didn't sucker punch Techno. Phil didn't look up from his paperwork. The question had been rhetorical. The worst thing that should have happened was Wilbur getting fucked by a fish again. Not *this*.

"Heh?" Techno gaped.

"We don't know how long it's been missing. Once we found it gone, we alerted the other countries. Essempii says theirs was gone, and L'Manburg didn't respond," Phil said. "We sent Ranboo over to investigate and..." Phil trailed off, a pinched expression on his face.

"He got married," Wilbur interjected.

"*Heh?*" Techno said, louder.

“Turns out Ranboo got caught the second he stepped into their white house.” Phil said, “and he sent us reports saying that he was doing fine undercover for months before he sent in a wedding invitation.”

“It was a very nice wedding.” Wilbur picked a bit of lint off his shirt. “Lovely. They even gave us a vase of flowers. I put them in the throne room.”

“Ranboo is married?” Techno was struggling to comprehend it. “*Ranboo?*”

“Officially it’s platonic.” Wilbur said, “but they did it to avoid taxes.”

“Why the fuck would Ranboo need to avoid taxes?”

“I mean, he got married to avoid them. So now he doesn’t have to now.” Wilbur rolled his eyes.

“How? When?”

“About two months ago. Last I heard, Ranboo adopted a kid with his new husband. But that’s not all!” Wilbur said with a prickly smile. “We’re in the middle of negotiations with L’Manburg about opening our borders with them!”

“*Heh?*”

“A member of the Syndicate openly married the leader of a country. I wanted to keep in touch with him.” Phil sniffed petulantly. “My own son was missing for months. I didn’t want his protégé to leave without contacting us again.”

“So we’re just opening the borders?”

“We would have discussed this with you but you were playing family with your abductor. You don’t get a say in it.” Wilbur accused Techno, “plus, we are opening negotiations with Essempii as well. Dream says hi by the way. Oh, don’t be like that. It isn’t like we’re opening our borders to 2b2t.”

Techno spluttered. “Is there anything *else* that happened while I was gone?”

Phil and Wilbur exchanged glances.

“So do you want the long version? Or just the gossip?” Wilbur asked, giving Techno a toothy smile. “Because a hell of a lot of things went down. First off, Niki-”

The door was knocked on gently. And the conversation immediately died. All three of them were staring at the door, until Phil stood up from his desk, “come in.”

Eret opened the door. He was technically the only one allowed in this wing at all. All other modes of communication were handled electronically. But it didn’t stop them from freezing at any point when their sanctuary was invaded by somebody who wasn’t their family. “Your majesty,” Eret gave them a deep bow, “we have news on the whereabouts of the rogue avain.”

Techno jerked against the chains, almost against his will. “Don’t.” He uttered, a deep panic rising up in him. He had tried. For *days*. Pleading, asking, almost begging at some points, for Phil to spare his runt. Techno had tried to tell them about Theseus, how he was *his*. The way he would sleep in Techno’s arms, the way his nose scrunched up when he was starting to wake up, his spitfire personality, and his personal vendetta against being called a kid.

He was a fire that could never be quenched. He burned so brightly- a light that Techno hadn’t known he needed in his life. Something to protect. To keep. To have. “Phil- don’t. Please, he didn’t do anything wrong. He is just a kid.” Techno’s *runt*.

Phil shook his head with a sigh, “Technoblade, we’ve been over this. Theseus did do something wrong, and you know it. Maybe...” Phil had a distant look in his eyes, “maybe if you hadn’t stayed away for too long I might have let you keep him. As a pet. But now you have to face the consequences.” He turned to Eret, “send me the information. I will personally see this done.”

Eret bowed once more before closing the door behind them.

“Phil,” Techno tried again, yanking on the chains, “Phil don’t. Phil... *Dad*. Please-” His runt was in danger. Danger from his own sounder. Chat’s infinite voices swelled up, screaming in his ears. Techno could feel himself tearing. Being split down the middle. Half of him needed to protect his runt, to tear and shed blood and destroy any and all threats. While the other half halted and protested the idea of hurting Wilbur and Phil.

“Techno,” Phil’s eyes grew soft at Techno’s use of *dad*. Hope swelled up in Techno’s chest. He was close- he was so close-! Phil was wavering. Almost at the edge of giving in.

“Dad,” Wilbur threw an arm around Techno’s shoulders, “you promised. Are you really going to let Techno off that easily?”

Phil’s eyes hardened, and Techno was ready to strangle his brother. “You’re right. Sorry Techno. I know this is hard. But once Theseus is dead, the easier it will be to break the imprint. I know this is tough. But I do this because I love you. You might not understand it now. But you will, one day. I’ll be back. Wilbur, keep an eye on him for me?”

“Sure. Have fun.” Wilbur waved goodbye, and then to Techno, “don’t worry Tech. Things will go back to normal soon. You can patrol the hallways, terrorize the guards, all of that. To your heart’s content. Just chillax.” Wilbur leaned back into the nest, his lips curling into a smirk.

The door closed behind Phil. Quick, like a striking viper, Techno reached over and caught Wilbur by the neck. Wilbur choked, his eyes widening in surprise. With a low hum, Techno narrowed his eyes at Wilbur. “No, no I don’t think I will. In fact, Wilbur. I think maybe you need a reminder too. Of exactly *who* is in charge here. You might be older than me, but *I* am the protector of our sounder. And you listen to *me*. ”

Phil was almost out of the door when he patted his pocket, and noticed he was missing his wallet. He paused and then sighed. Okay. Well, he needed that. So he turned around and went

back up the dozens of stairs to his room. Muttering under his breath about constantly forgetting things.

He wasn't *old*. He just misplaced things. Despite what Wilbur and Techno teased him about losing his reading glasses, Phil was just as spry and young from when he was actually thirty.

Grumbling under his breath, he turned the corner in the hallway just in time to hear a distant thump. Phil paused for a second, and then sped up. His soft-soled boots barely made a noise as he headed towards his nest. Flexing his fingers as they grew dark and his talons appeared, Phil was on guard. There was a muffled crash and Phil gently opened the door to find-

Techno looming over Wilbur's stocky frame. His broad arm pressing down on Wilbur's throat, his tusks bared as his lips were pulled back in a snarl. Wilbur jerked and twitched as Techno snarled and growled in his ear. Wilbur's tail was wrapped firmly in Techno's hand, and he pulled on it with every word he spoke in hushed growls. The words too soft for Phil to hear.

"Damn it," Phil pushed the door open further until it hit the wall with a bang. "I leave for five minutes! Techno get off of your brother." If he had a water bottle he would be spraying his youngest child.

When Techno wasn't moving fast enough, Phil reached out and pulled him off of Wilbur. Wilbur's eyes were unfocused, and he was making little soft wheezing noises. Techno growled low, still staring down at Wilbur. But Phil had lifetimes of experience with his children, he extended one wing to separate the two from seeing each other.

Phil leaned down and gripped Wilbur's forearms and pulled him to his feet. "Just breathe, Wil. It's okay."

The foggy look in Wilbur's eyes was quickly disappearing, and he blinked rapidly to dispel it further. "I... I'm fine." Wilbur croaked, half of his words still coming out as grunts. He swayed on his feet, and Phil kept a hand on his elbow. "I think. Give me a moment."

"Take as much time as you need. But *you*," Phil turned to Techno with narrowed eyes, "are in so much trouble." Techno leaned against the cushions as if he hadn't a care in the world. His arms folded as he calmly regarded his father. "What did you think you could do with Wilbur pulled into his instincts like that? And here I was starting to feel bad about how I kept you locked up in here."

Techno sneered, and the two stared down at the other. A battle of wills. Techno's red eyes locked against Phil's blue. Finally, after a few minutes, Techno glanced away. One of his ears flicked with displeasure. Phil is still above him in the hierarchy. And it was a title that Phil kept with pride.

"I'm fine," Wilbur batted Phil's hand away. "He didn't pull me down that far."

"Well, I think it's clear that I can't leave the two of you alone." Phil crossed his arms, "Wilbur, do you think you can take care of the kid?"

A shit-eating grin stretched across Wilbur's face, "absolutely. I don't think I'm feeling too merciful at the moment, not after the trick you tried to pull on me Tech." He rubbed at his throat where Techno had gripped it. "You're just making it worse for the kid when I get my hands on him."

"Good," Phil reached up and fondly tucked a lock of Wilbur's hair behind one ear. "Have fun, Wil. Tell me how it goes."

"Do not touch him!" Techno rose up from the nest, and the chains wrapped around his wrists began to glow with a deep purple hue. He let out an animalistic snarl, one hand snapping out to grab Wilbur. But the chain was too short, jerking his hand to an abrupt stop. Stretched and poised just in front of Wilbur's eyes.

"Wil," Phil sighed, "could you calm him down before you go?"

"It would be my pleasure," Wilbur smiled and began to hum.

Phil laid next to Techno on the nest, idly pulling his fingers through Techno's hair as he slept. The pinched expression on his son's face was relaxed, and he looked so young. His feathers rustled as he covered Techno in one of his wings protectively.

And for the second time that day, the door to his room was knocked on.

Wilbur stepped out of a vehicle, a hand going to his pocket to grab the box of cigarettes. Nameless men surrounded him, and he studied the warehouse expressionlessly.

"He's in there?" Wilbur asked, and one man nodded, "good. I want every window to have a gun aimed at it. If you see him try to fly, you have my order to shoot." He flicked the lighter open and held it to the end of the cig. "Fuckin' kill him on sight." He mumbled as he inhaled a breath of smoke.

"Yes, your majesty."

"I am sorry your majesty," Eret opened the door and gave a frantic bow, "but there seems to be a situation-"

Phil rose from the nest, "what's wrong?"

Wilbur stepped into the shadow of the warehouse, holding the cig between two fingers as it lazily burned in his hand. With a soft hum, Wilbur glanced around the dark interior of the building. Stacks of boxes lined the walls and corners. "Come out, come out, wherever you are," Wilbur sang softly, stepping in further.

He didn't expect the sudden overwhelming scent of blood to hit him.

“I’m so sorry sir,” Eret said breathlessly as they tried to jog to keep up with Phil’s long strides down the hallway. “If I had known they would be coming I would have warned you.”

“It’s fine, Eret,” Phil said with barely a hint of a smile. There were worse things that could happen. “I’m certain it was a misunderstanding. Perhaps the wrong date was put on the email. I do not think it’s your fault.”

“The meeting for parliament was supposed to be in three days,” Eret huffed, “I should have caught on to this sooner. It is my mistake, your majesty. All of the council members have gathered for the general quota in the meeting hall. I’ve sent you all of the data for the meeting to your phone.”

“Thank you,” Phil paused by the grand double doors to the meeting hall. There was a commotion on the other side, and Eret’s brow furrowed as they opened the door.

The prestigious and powerful members of the Empire were sitting in the grand open space, men and women of all different kinds to represent their section of Antarctica. These were the people who Wilbur and Phil favored, and trusted slightly to keep a section of the Empire running smoothly. In reality, these people held no power. They were figureheads at best. They were mostly toys for Wilbur to pit against each other.

And they were about to throw hands with each other. A woman was yelling at the top of her lungs, “you dirty *lying backstabber!*” That was the first thing that caught Phil’s attention, as she then punched the nearest person.

“You filthy bitch, you stole our revenue-”

“-I will cut your tongue out of your mouth, wench-” a man shook his fist at another.

“You double-crossing bastard, just wait until I get my hands on you.”

“-*that was my funding you cunt!*”

“What the hell?” Phil mumbled under his breath.

“Sir!” A man yelled down the hallway, racing towards Eret almost breathless, “there is a situation-!”

The iron tang of blood filled the air and Wilbur stepped into the shadows a little bit more. A corner of a box to see the dark stain stretching across the ground. He tensed up, slowly walking forwards, eyes scanning.

It was a fucking massacre.

The scent of blood was overpowered by the stench of decay. Wilbur stopped at the edge, staring out at a crime scene. Bodies littered the ground. Men, wearing tacky old clothes that were stained with blood had since turned into black stains. One man wearing a battered old coat still had his mouth open in shock, his back folded backward onto a crate as a jagged

piece of wood stuck out of his chest. He was impaled on it. The wood jutted out, still wet with blood.

A maggot wormed out from between the corpse's teeth. Curling around the bone. Wilbur glanced away with disgust.

Now that Wilbur was closer, he could hear the sound of hundreds of flies buzzing. His lips pulled back in revulsion.

Guns littered the ground. An item that had been banned in the Empire since the foundation. And yet there were dozens of them here. He kicked one away from him. All unregulated. Calculating, Wilbur studied the scene.

He knew what the splatter of blood meant. He saw how most of the men had their throats torn out by something *sharp*. The flesh around their necks was gone, leaving a dark waterfall of blood staining their chests. He took a few steps forwards, glass crunching under his feet.

There had been gunfire. Wilbur spotted the bullet holes and destruction that came with it. A window had been shattered. The remains of a broken stool littered the ground. And yet, the target hadn't been hit by a bullet.

In the middle, there was a corpse, slumped over and still holding the shotgun. The corpse wasn't what Wilbur was interested in, but a slip of paper stuck to the chest of the man. Stepping closer, keeping an eye out for any hidden tricks. But he found none.

A swarm of flies rose up caressed against Wilbur's hand lightly as he plucked the paper from the corpse. A trail of dried blood had streaked across the paper, as Wilbur read the words lazily scrawled there.

A heart beat passed.

"Oh shit," Wilbur hissed to himself, pulling his phone out. The screen blinked to life, and Wilbur muttered a curse under his breath as the icon blinked 'no signal.'

Turning on his heel, Wilbur bolted out of the warehouse. A lit cigarette was left smoking on the ground behind him.

"-there is a crowd of guards fighting." The man spoke to Eret, bowing low, "we can't pull them apart. One of them claimed that their companion stole his watch. When the other was denying the accusation, the watch fell from their pocket. And they began to brawl and it pulled others into the fight."

"Excuse me?" Eret snarled, "they should know better. Thank you for informing me. Your majesty, I apologize but I need to deal with this."

Phil's head slowly tilted to the side, and he held his hand up to stop Eret. He glanced at the chaotic scene inside of the meeting hall. There was an itch. A niggling feeling that something

was painfully out of place, and it wasn't the sudden pandemonium the castle was experiencing that was causing it.

Something was *wrong*.

"Your highness?"

"This..." Phil said slowly, "is a distraction. Where is the fighting taking place?"

"In the courtyard, sir."

"They're making us pay attention to the north and east side of the castle." Phil's thought churned, "that means something is happening on the opposite side. What-" and his breath caught painfully in his throat as it hit him. A strangled noise escaped Phil as horror shot through him like lightning.

"Technoblade!"

Chapter End Notes

Phil, walking in to see Techno trying to dominate Wilbur, pulling out a spray bottle:

Bad! Bad son!!

Techno: hisses

There has been a distinct lack of SBI being possessive about each other! They're all about Tommy this and Tommy that, why can't I have a Techno who forces Wilbur to cuddle with him?? Hmmm?? Ever thought of that?? Yeah. That's what I thought. *mic drop*

Also if you are going to comment just to tell me that 'this made me really uncomfortable because of how dark this is' please don't! I have tagged this fic with warnings. If you did not read them and you get upset then that is on you. Please, for the love of everything, read the tags!

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A Week Previous:

The warehouse was the stuff of cliches. Dusty, abandoned, full of boxes and chains hanging from the ceiling. Tommy had worked with plenty of employers before, and they always chose the same shitty locations to meet up. Why couldn't they just meet at McPuffy's inside playground or something? At least that would change things up.

Instead, Tommy had to visit the crummy buildings that every two-bit thug owned, and he wanted his payment. His wings ached from the bindings he wrapped around them, and the stolen hoodie he grabbed was so large he was practically drowning in it. It hid the obvious lump on his back until Tommy could leave this damned Empire and ask Punz to make him a new enchanted bracelet.

"Hello," Tommy called out, his voice muffled by the simple blue and white medical mask he wore. He didn't have his suit, and he didn't want his appearance to make its way around the criminal gossip groups. Thus, a baseball cap pulled down low over a pair of sunglasses with a mask over his mouth and nose. Tommy was perfectly disguised.

His voice echoed around the dark space, and Tommy rolled his eyes. "If you're trying to make me wait just because you can as a power move, I swear I will burn this place to the ground. I'm going to give you to the count of five-" that was a move Tommy learned from Techno.

Fuckin prick. Just the thought of the general- no the *prince*- made Tommy's blood boil. He clenched his fists together and felt his nails sharpen from the heightened emotion. Tommy hadn't *had* talons before but somehow being around his flock had kick-started his aggression arc. He didn't even know what was happening with his body anymore. Tommy felt off-kilter constantly like he was just slightly out of balance. It only fed into the righteous anger that ran through him.

Fuck Technoblade. He wasn't a part of Tommy's life. Not anymore.

By the time Tommy counted to four, six figures stepped out of the shadows. They were older men, wearing bedraggled clothes with shitty armor strapped on, weapons in their hands. This wasn't exactly the reception that Tommy wanted, but he's been intimidated by bigger folk. Jester from Las Nevadas can take that particular achievement. Bitch had a super rad scar across his face.

One of the men with a beard that fell to his waist gave Tommy a side-eye. "You're Red?"

"Yep." Tommy replied, "I just want my payment for the job. Then I will never step into this shithole again." Which was absolutely true.

The man's lip curled into a sneer. "Job was to keep General Technoblade for a few *days*. Not months."

"Wait for real? I thought you guys said three months?" Tommy acted surprised. His eyes widened and he played dumb, "Huh, I guess that does make more sense. Well, what's done is done. Give me my payment."

Tommy wanted that damned nether star. The whole mess was a bitch to deal with, and he at least wanted what he was promised. It was the one good thing that came out of this.

"We thought you's was dead." One of the men piped up.

"And?"

"We don't got it no more." The leader said, and his grip tightened on his gun.

If Tommy was a lesser man, he would have accepted the fact that he did go off the grid for a few months unexpectedly. That meant most people wouldn't have kept the payment that was promised to him. But Tommy was a big man. The biggest, and that meant he was fucking pissed. His body felt like it was going through puberty *again*. And half of his brain kept telling him to go back to his fucking abuser while the other half was sobbing into a handkerchief over the betrayal. Anger was the best emotion to have. It kept him from sinking into a soul-sucking depression that threatened him at every turn.

Tommy simply did not have the patience for this.

"And what did you do with the star?" Tommy asked calmly, even though he could feel his feathers bristling under the hoodie.

One of the men spat on the ground. "Sold it."

Tommy eyed the men over. Their worn faces hardened, unkempt hair, the battered dirtied clothes, and the way that they gripped their guns. Tommy noticed a patch on one of the men's arms, and it took him a second to place it. He had seen it in the cabin's basement.

"You're a part of the rebellion against the Empire?" Tommy asked, raising an eyebrow. Honest to Prime, he thought they were all dead by now. Techno certainly thought so.

Fuck! Tommy was not *thinking* about Techno now.

"How did you know?" One of the men pointed their gun at Tommy.

"I just recognized your patch, that's all," Tommy replied, holding his hands up peacefully. "I saw it in the history books." Absolute bullshit, but they didn't know that.

The leader cracked a grin, "you hear that boys, we're making history!" And the dirty group of men laughed and cheered. Tommy noted that almost all of them were missing their teeth. Disgusting. "We haven't been forgotten by the outside world."

Lovely, as much as Tommy loved to stand in this shithole for the next hour while the men stroked their egos, Tommy would rather have some type of compensation. And looking at how ragged the men were, they were poorer than dirt.

Tommy could hear Techno say, *'ugh poor people'* in that snobby voice of his and *Tommy wasn't thinking about him anymore, so stop it*. He is angry. Tommy is going to continue being angry until he gets out of this shitty country.

And *then* he was going to watch all of the Manhunt movies on repeat while eating ice cream while he tried to hide the tears that leaked down his face.

"How much did you sell it for?" Tommy asked, abruptly. The victory the nameless men were having ceased. They were suddenly reminded that Tommy was there. How fun. "The star."

"Enough. What's it to you?"

Tommy let out a long sigh, "because I'm fairly certain that you didn't have the nether star in the first place, that's why." He gestured to them, "if you had sold the star then you wouldn't be wearing *that*. Those things are worth a couple hundred million. If there was one on the market then I would have bought one already. So- this whole thing was worth nothing. Getting into the Empire, stealing-," Tommy didn't want to say his name. Saying it would summon him like a demon from hell. "*-him*. It was all a ruse."

Purpled was good at vetting out the crazies who tried to use Tommy. How these fools managed to pull one over on Purpled was impossible. Purpled was just too good at-

"Who are you working for?" Tommy asked because that is the only possible way that this job landed on Tommy's lap. Somebody had to be pulling the strings. They had to have good connections to pass Purpled's tests.

Tommy will *ruin* them.

Nobody stiffed Red, the best damn thief in the world, without suffering.

"We ain't gonna tell you." Their guns were pointing at him again. Tommy let out a long sigh.

"Really? Do we have to do this?" Tommy gave them an unimpressed look, "I have shit to do today. And I really don't want to put in the effort right now."

"Sorry, Red. But orders are orders-"

Oh, Prime. The leader was monologuing now. Great. This is exactly what Tommy needed today.

"We appreciate the work you did, although if you had just killed the general then that would have made life so much easier." The leader cocked the gun, "our boss is going to make the Empire rue the day it ever overlooked the rebellion! We will tear the walls down, brick by brick. And the dictators will beg for our mercy, but it won't save them! We'll kill everybody who stands in our way. Starting with you!"

It was one thing to stiff him of his payment. It was another to threaten Tommy's flock. He didn't fight as the bird inside him whipped its head out of the nest and *seethed*. Techno was his. General or not, hell, supervillain or not, Technoblade is *Tommy's*. And these pathetic worms were saying that they were going to kill and hurt what was his?

Tommy's brain suddenly went foggy and all he could focus on was the words that rang out. It was like a switch was flipped inside of Tommy's head. Things didn't make as much sense as before. Like swimming through thick gelatin, Tommy could barely think anymore. His ears buzzed as the leader guy said some more words, hefting his gun in Tommy's direction, but he couldn't hear it.

They were-

-going to hurt his flock?

There was a weird sensation in Tommy's chest.

Click.

It came from the same place, deep in Tommy's lungs, where he chirped and twittered.

Click.

What a strange sensation.

Click.

Tommy's head tilted slightly, his pupils dilated into pinpricks as he stared at his prey.

A death rattle was emanating from Tommy's chest, rising up through his lungs and heart. It shook him to his soul. Tommy closed his eyes and blinked languished before suddenly *pouncing*. The pop of a gun echoed in the open space.

A man screamed loudly. It cut off just as quickly as it appeared.

The worst thing about being in the Empire still was that Tommy was *bored*. If he could take his chance, Tommy would spread his wings and take off. Getting out of the Empire would be a dream come true. He could finally be in his nest and pull up some manhunt fanfiction. Relax from the truly awful job he tried to pull.

But every time Tommy would try and See if it was the right time to leave, it always ended in disaster. Death. Blood. Losing an arm. Getting shot in the leg. Beheaded. All of it. Tommy had Seen it.

He had to hand it to the Syndicate. They were very serious about their borders.

The best thing right now was to wait. And that was a sucky option because waiting meant staying *longer* and Tommy was tired of being here. He was a free bird, pun intended. He traveled all over the globe. Stealing whatever caught his eye, flipping heroes off as he ran

into the sunset, getting all of the women. You know, that kind of stuff. But instead, Tommy had to sit in a dusty old abandoned apartment. Twiddling his thumbs.

The last few months had pent up his energy. Tommy was ready to get out and *do* something. His next heist with the Dream Team *will* involve a firework launcher and a bouncy castle. It will be so explosive and amazing, and Tommy couldn't wait.

But he had to stay though. Keep a low profile. The worst mistake Tommy could make right now was to try and escape when the Empire was alerted to his presence. In a week or two, Tommy could peacefully leave with nobody the wiser. The heat would die down, and their men who patrolled the borders would have dropped their vigilant attention.

His hands itched to do something. The first thing that came to mind was to steal a phone and call his friends. At least let them know that he was *alive*. But Tommy has seen the CIS episodes. He wasn't going to take a chance. They could probably track him down just by opening up youtube or some shit. Even though he did want to catch up on all of the videos he missed.

Instead, he was resisting the urge to find the nearest internet connection and keeping himself locked away. With *nothing* to do.

At least when he was in the cabin he had Techno-

No!

Tommy was not going to think about that backstabbing two-faced liar of an asshole. Even the bird inside him was seething with anger still. It was hard for his bird brain to comprehend how Techno had betrayed Tommy for making him imprint. For all it knew, Techno was flock and it was happy to have him. But Tommy knew it. And he held a deep grudge that Techno manipulated him like that.

But there was one thing that both of them agreed on.

Tommy was the greatest thief in the world, and Techno *didn't believe him*. Tommy told him *stories*. All of them were true. (Well. Okay. Maybe the one about stealing the Eiffel Tower was a bit stretched. Tommy did steal it. Just the Las Vegas one. It was smaller. Easier to hide.) And Techno treated him like a kid telling big tales. And it was infuriating. Tommy *earned* his rep.

So what better thing to do than prove to Techno that Tommy was brilliant and a mastermind at his job?

He was going to steal their hats.

Just because Tommy *can*. (That, and he was fucking bored as hell.)

He started as he would with any normal job, with a google search. He swiped a phone off some random person and pulled open the bootleg version of google. He would discard the

phone in a ditch later after he found all of the information he could.

There was going to have some kind of barrier to block his searches for things outside of the Empire, the borders were not only physical but on the web too. But Tommy knew a shady VPN website like the back of his hand. And once he downloaded the application, which was no doubt going to log everything Tommy did and sell it to big corporations, he threw himself onto the wiki of the Syndicate.

There was a lot that Tommy knew about. He did his research months ago when he walked into this shit hole of a country. But he didn't plan to actually meet the Syndicate while he was here. But life fucked him over by making him *kidnap* the Blood God. If Tommy had known he would have turned that offer down so fast. No wonder nobody else took the job. If it was for the fact that it was in the Empire, perhaps a few individuals might have been interested.

Curse Tommy for being the only one dumb enough to actually do these kinds of dumb jobs. Red was known for doing the wildest things. And somehow still pulling them off flawlessly. That's why Tommy is the world's best thief.

The Egg theft is the most famous heist he was known for, and it was kind of an accident. Wrong place, wrong time, kind of died, Tommy didn't think about it much. But he had also done dozens of other jobs that were just as legendary. Like stealing from the Hermits.

Well, okay. Tommy tried to steal from Scar first, but the man honestly believed he just misplaced his items instead of it getting stolen. Tommy hadn't actually realized how many fucking chests the guy had, and it wasn't interesting or funny to watch him realize he had been stolen from. He just got a little sad and quiet and said it must've lagged. Tommy kind of felt bad so he snuck in and replaced all of the diamonds he swiped.

Prime, that had been such a fun time. He spent a week wandering around, checking out their cool builds, and taking everything he could pick up.

Any kind of Hermit was fucking insane. Any trespassers were killed on sight. So Tommy kept to the shadows. He didn't mess with the big names, like Grian or Mumbo, who were well-known villains. Their builds were legendary. The world could look. But never touch. Lest they incited the wrath of some of the most power hungry people on earth.

Tommy is pretty sure they figured out he was there. Purpled mentioned how there was a bounty on his head. Not that anybody could actually get the jump on Tommy. He was too powerful! The greatest, biggest, poggiest, man to ever exist.

Tommy wrote down the information on some sticky notes on what he found on the Syndicate. It wasn't new information. They were known as the biggest villains, not to mention they took over a quarter of the world. He grew up learning about them in school.

The Emperor, Angel of Death, was number two on the list. He manipulated shadows. He could make a massive army of crows from them. From what Tommy could understand, Angel could use the crows as spies. There were also some rumors about how Angel could teleport, but Tommy thought that was bunk. Still, he wasn't going to take a chance. As long as the Angel was unaware of Tommy, he was safe.

So Tommy immediately wrote down, '*get him as far away from the castle as possible.*' He didn't want to fuck around with Angel nearby. Not to mention he was an avian as well, and that could only spell disaster. The two of them didn't mesh. It would only end in bloodshed, and it was more than likely it would be Tommy dead on the ground.

Siren, number six on the charts, was more unknown than the Angel. There was a lot of confusion on how his powers worked. Some said it was just mind-control, but others said he can create music out of nowhere like a mythical Siren.

Still, the main point was that Siren could just say a few words and have anybody bending backward to do whatever he said. Tommy recalled how luring it was the brief moment he was around Siren. He wasn't as big as Angel, nor was he a tank like the Blood God. But he was sly and liked to twist his words. Arguably, that could mean he was the most dangerous out of the three. Words could shake the world to its core.

Tommy still wrote '*theater bitch*' next to Siren's name. Wilbur had an ego. And that was a pretty big weakness that Tommy could exploit. All he had to do was throw some glitter in the corner and let Wilbur be drawn to the mess and call it good. Because who would *dare* mess with Siren?

(Tommy would.

Tommy would absolutely mess with Siren.)

Fuck, this was the type of villain that Tommy would actively torment. Siren's ego, the whole slimy shitty bastard vibe he had, the fact that he acted like he was better than anybody- Tommy would hunt this guy down and fucking tie him to a chair and bleach his hair just because he could. It was a passion of Tommy's to give assholes like Siren a reality check.

It's a pity that Tommy would never see him again. Once he was out of the Empire, Tommy was going to burn all of the bridges here. Including Technoblade. It was just too dangerous to mess with any of the Syndicate after this. Even if Wilbur ever stepped outside of the Empire, Tommy will avoid him even though he wanted to fucking roast over a pit.

Something about the slimy bastard made Tommy's Cain instincts flair up. He wanted to knock that smug look off his face. Preferably with a hammer.

Now... Blood God. Number three on the villain lists. Some could argue that he was more dangerous than the Angel, but the two were both on par with their strength and abilities. How had Tommy even *survived* in that cabin with Techno? Even with the cuff, which Technoblade ripped off the second it forced him to do something he didn't want to do, it was clear how easy Techno could have just killed him from the start. It kind of freaked Tommy out knowing that.

So much for his master plan. Geez.

For Techno, Tommy just had to keep him far, far away. Out of the range of his blood control. Just... a little bit of chaos. Maybe a hint of something suspicious happening and Techno would be out of the way, sniffing the clues like, ha, a bloodhound with a scent.

Tommy had a vague idea of what to do next. All he had to do was scope out the area and plan the rest of it. It's a good thing he had all the time in the world to do this with.

A bored Tommy was the worst kind of Tommy. For everybody else involved. A bored Tommy kind of Tommy usually led him down into a very exciting and possibly dangerous adventure. Which is exactly what he wanted around here.

Okay, this isn't exactly what Tommy had meant when he started this heist. Prime help him, he was going to do it. Even though he wasn't too keen on this part.

Tommy gave a viscous stare into a mirror and pointed at the reflection. "You are a man." He whispered, "the biggest man. The most poggiest, bestest, manliest man who has ever been on this planet. And nothing can change that. Nothing."

His reflection stared back accusingly. "Just because," Tommy gestured to the clothes he wore, "you are wearing a dress doesn't mean that you aren't the biggest person who has ever existed. Got it? Don't you dare forget it."

The girl with brown hair and burning blue eyes stared back at Tommy in the mirror. And he flipped her off. The girl copied his action, even the sneer that curled on his lips. The wig curling down his shoulders felt heavy, and the makeup he had painstakingly put on after watching a few youtube tutorials felt fake and thick on his face. Fuck! Tommy kicked the bathroom garbage can, the plastic bin tipping over and spilling the used paper towels on the ground.

The public bathroom was empty. Tommy had checked every stall. But it made his skin crawl to be in a women's bathroom. He was very much not one of them. It was the same as the men's bathroom, only a bit neater and didn't smell like piss.

He wasn't actually angry it was more like he was embarrassed. If anybody figured this out, he would actually die from sheer humiliation.

Purpled would never let him live it down. This is why it was so important that Purpled never, ever, finds out.

Then Tommy snapped another glare into the mirror, and pointed his finger back at it again before hissing, "all women are queens." And he left, walking out of the building and into the fresh air as the city bustled around him.

The air brushed up against his thighs and Tommy resisted pulling the dress down while he walked. Women were amazing wearing skirts and dresses, there was a draft up there and he didn't appreciate where it was going. The heels clicked on the ground, and Tommy pulled out a purse he stole and pawed through the meager contents before grabbing a compact mirror.

It was easy to fall into a role. The compact clicked open, and Tommy visibly checked his makeup as he wandered down the sidewalk. He wasn't too happy about dressing up as a girl, but he did a lot of things he normally wouldn't just to snub his nose at people.

Tommy paused on the corner of a busy street, and it looked like he was waiting for the light to change before crossing the street. A few other people stood a few feet away, doing the same. But Tommy's eyes were not on the compact mirror. His gaze lingered on the figure on the other side of the street. A lanky figure wearing a red beanie, holding a cup in a fingerless gloved hand.

Bitch.

Just the sight of him made Tommy's blood curdle. He didn't know where this bloodlust was coming from, but this fucker- *this fucker* tried to take him from Techno. And it was a crime the bird in his head couldn't forgive.

Without even glancing away from his target, he angled the compact mirror away. The sunlight caught on the reflective surface, hitting the perfect angle to beam it right into the eyes of a passing driver. There was a squeal of tires as the break was pressed on them, but the driver wasn't fast enough. The front of the car crunched painfully just as the light switched, and Tommy didn't hesitate to walk across the street.

The mob of people grew thicker as they all wanted to see what happened. Tommy squirmed through the throng, putting the compact away. He beelined to Siren's lanky form. His shoulder rammed into Wilbur's body, and Tommy stumbled into him, hands slipping in and out of pockets quickly.

"Watch where you're going, fuck face." Tommy bitched at him, glaring as he pulled the hat off of Wilbur's head. Stuffing it into the purse in a careful move.

"Sorry," Wilbur blinked at Tommy, surprised. Tommy scoffed and continued striding away. His heart hammered in his chest, and he was half expecting a warning shout to raise the alarm.

But nothing happened, and Tommy slunk back into the shadows before tossing the dress away.

One hat down. Two more to go.

A lock jiggled and slowly gave up the ghost beneath Tommy's expert fingers. A few more twists with a rake, and it gave up. Unlatching, and leaving a door to swing open. Tommy waited for a second, on bated breath, as he scanned the office.

No cameras. No oddly placed stuffed animals or books on the shelf that might contain. All of it looked fairly normal for a dickhead's office. It took a minimum amount of research in a library for Tommy to find the nearest government office and even less time to walk to it. The mayor of the city worked here. Although, the mayor isn't exactly the name for them. Just a bunch of pawns to play political games that didn't do anything. Even Tommy could see they had no power. Tommy had to wait until everybody went home before walking up to the doors and letting himself inside.

They didn't even *lock* the front doors.

Guess that's a perk if the Blood God patrolled the streets for anybody who had a death wish for breaking the rules. Crime was just... nonexistent here. Because if you actually committed one, you'd fucking die.

Which made this even more painfully easy for Tommy. These people had no sense of preservation. Thankfully the only person who had sense actually locked their office door. And even then, it was a lock that Tommy picked within thirty seconds.

Idly, Tommy wondered if they kept their valuables under lock and key or if they kept them out in the open as well. Would the museums be hard to crack here? Or is the threat of the Syndicate enough to prevent any kind of crime?

No! No, stay on task, Tommy Danger Kraken Innit. Tommy crept into the room and, once he was certain there weren't any sensors, tripwires, or... uh, bombs that might be hidden away, Tommy sat down in a big old armchair and booted up the computer system.

A picture of a family dressed up in tuxes and fancy dresses popped up on the screen. And, huh, there was actually a password on the computer. At least somebody had sense. Tommy leaned back and observed the desk. A few knickknacks decorated the space. Nothing big. He rifled through a stack of papers, and then looked at the sticky notes. Looking for any clue for what this dumbass had for a password.

Then he flipped the keyboard over and saw a sticky note with 'Password1234' written on it and sighed.

Idiots.

He pulled open the mayor's email and pursued through the starred emails. Ooooh. Was this blackmail? Political intrigue? Comments about funding? Tommy spent an hour clicking through the attachments and read the dark secrets he found. There was a surprising amount of content that spoke of a spider web being carefully crafted and Tommy was about to light it up with a match.

It would be a shame if the mayor's competitor got a hold of this. Or that his allies got a hold of the fact that he was going to betray them. Tommy opened up a new email, typed in one of the mayor's enemies' names, and wrote out, *'dear Kaitlyn, I hope this finds you in terrible health. I think you're an evil bitch, and I cannot wait to ruin you at the next meeting in two days. You won't be able to get the funding you've been needing for the midsummers event. Rot in hell where you belong, witch.'*

Tommy didn't leave the building until the sun began to rise. Gleeefully cackling to himself over the drama he just started.

The next night, he broke into Kaitlyn's office and continued to send scathing and witty emails. Slowly stroking the flames higher and higher.

The shorter wig itched. To save a trip from breaking into yet another horribly guarded store and stealing another wig, Tommy chopped the brunette hair into a shorter style. Which was a

mistake. The hair poked at his face and neck, and there was an uncomfortable moment when Tommy just wanted to rip it off and wildly scratch at himself while talking to the guards.

For an Empire that's founded by supervillains, you'd think they would have an impressive security system. But they didn't. They just let people *walk* into their castle. Guards were posted and asked who you were, yes, but Tommy just fucking *lied* and they let him in. These were not the men whose watches Tommy swiped and planted in their pockets, nor was it the captain, Eret, whose key card Tommy plucked from his pocket. These randos truly believed that nobody would actually dare break into the Empire Stronghold and they didn't verify if Tommy should just be walking in or not.

It was too easy. Far, far too easy. If Tommy didn't see the fucking future and knew what was going to happen, he would probably chicken out. The idea of this being a trap wiggled in the back of his head. But Tommy was far too invested to stop.

The plan was ticking along. Tommy blinked slowly and Saw-

-a squeak of his shoes on the ground-

-his path unobstructed-

-pausing at the third door from the end-

-a crown glinting on a cushion-

Tommy smiled and walked down an empty hallway completely relaxed. He didn't have to worry about guards patrolling this area. After a week of planning and various crimes, it all led down to this. The Syndicate were all caught up in the mess that Tommy made, and he had free reign to ransack their rooms. Siren was off dealing with the political storm Tommy made, Techno was dealing with the mutining guards, and Angel was as far as Tommy could get him from the castle.

He had all the time in the world to complete this job. At least, for the next hour, he did.

Tommy tugged the wig off of his head and threw it over his shoulder. Running his hands through his blonde hair, which was annoyingly long and fell into his eyes. He pulled it back from his face and looked up at a camera hidden in one of the corners and gave it a shit-eating grin. He flicked both of his middle fingers up at it. He shot finger guns at the next hidden camera, and the next one he stuck out his tongue.

He fucking knew where they put all their cameras. And they weren't even *that* hidden. They should look at Warden's setup. His redstone lab was locked up behind so many layers of security it takes Tommy a solid month each time he wants to break in and snatch something from him. Never mind that Sam would totally just *give* Tommy whatever he wanted if he asked. That wasn't the point.

Tommy waltzed down the hallway. The only thing that was missing was the music. But Tommy hummed instead. Of course, it was the Manhunt theme. But it was still fucking rad. There weren't any pressure plates, but Tommy still fucking danced his way down to his goal.

He *won*. Fuck Technoblade and his shitty brother. May the two of them look back at this footage and see how many fucks Tommy gave to them.

Tommy paused at a door and, holy shit, it wasn't locked. Again. Not that Tommy was complaining, but for a place that was hyped up as being a literal stronghold that could never be infiltrated, it was pathetically easy to get in. The knob turned in his hand and Tommy entered Technoblade's room.

The scent of Technoblade was... oh. It was nice. Tommy hesitated, one foot in. And his wings beneath his shirt twitched as his brain suddenly shrieked, *flock!! Flock is here!*

No. Techno's room was empty but the faint scent of him still lingered. Tommy closed the door with a quiet click, and he looked around. It was... peaceful. Techno's nest, or was it called a den for a piglin, consisted of silky black pillows and blankets on a large mattress. Tommy resisted the urge to crawl in, pushing the whining mess of his bird brain away. He was here for a job. A desk sat in the corner, and a bookshelf filled with aged novels that had been lovingly cared for sat next to it. A dozen swords were pinned up across the wall, and Tommy carefully crept over to peer at the sharp blades.

Fuck, was that netherite? Tommy's hands itched to take it. He hesitated with indecision and then realized that he was being stupid. He can take whatever he wants! Hell yeah! Tommy picked it up. And instantly fell over. The weight of the sword pulled him over until Tommy collapsed on the thick bear rug on the ground.

Okay.

Well.

Maybe Tommy wasn't going to steal a sword.

He left it sitting on the ground as he picked himself off, and brushed his jacket from imaginary dust. Clearing his throat, he glanced around. No cameras witnessed his... moment of embarrassment.

What other stuff did Techno have laying around that wasn't heavier than a fucking boulder? Tommy pulled open the doors to the closet and his mouth dropped. The sight of so much *gold* nearly knocked him off his feet again. Necklaces were lined up, glinting in the light. Rings were set on velvet cushions, gems glinting from where they were inset in the metal. Crowns were placed on plush pillows, and there was a fucking wall of just *earrings*. Holy shit was that a collar? And- those were anklets. And those were bracelets over there!

Tommy stared, gaping, for a solid minute before coming back to himself. He swallowed dryly and rubbed his hands as he walked into the closet. "Hello, darling. Where have you been, my whole life."

He- he had to stay on task. But... There was so much *gold*. Tommy didn't mind the metal, but it did look so good when the light played on the surface. It was the gems that drew him in. Tommy plucked a few rings and slipped them into his pocket, the diamonds and emeralds

practically asking him to take them. He was here for the fucking crown, but Tommy found a few new necklaces put in his bag, and a pair of emerald earrings joined them.

Tommy was eyeing a bracelet that had a rainbow of gems inset into it when he pulled himself away. Okay. He had to stay on task. As much as Tommy wanted to drag everything into his bag and sneak away with it clanging on his back, he realistically couldn't carry it all. There was just too much. And gold was pretty heavy.

The signature crown of the Blood God sat on a cushion in the middle of the room. And Tommy picked it up and twirled it around in his hands, looking at it from every angle. It was... nice. Had a few gems, the gold was polished, it looked very well cared for.

Pity Techno wasn't going to own it anymore. Tommy slid it into his backpack and turned on his heel. Now, the next thing he had to do was find the Emperor's room and steal his... hat? Crown? Whatever he wore. And- wait.

Tommy needed to leave a calling card. Reaching under his jacket, he fumbled around until one of his fingers caught on a feather. And, with a grimace, pulled on it. It stung, horribly. But it was one of the smaller ones that didn't matter much when it came to flight. He pulled it out and held it up against the light, and the golden feather gleamed.

"I am the world's greatest thief," Tommy said, as he placed it on the pillow that the crown once sat on. "And don't you ever think otherwise, Technoblade."

Then he left the glittering and luring closet behind. Closing the door behind him, he turned to leave when something dark caught his eye. A shape in the window. Tommy's relaxed form stiffened, and he turned his head so sharply it hurt.

A crow stared back at him. It cocked its head to the side, its red beady eyes staring at him. Tommy didn't blink, didn't breathe, didn't *move*. Maybe if Tommy was a statue it wouldn't see him.

It blinked twice and cawed before taking off in a flurry of wings and feathers. Leaving Tommy filled with an icy dread. That was- that was Angel's crow. It had seen him. And now it was flying back to its master to snitch.

The crows had a radius. If there was one here that meant-

The Angel of Death was here. He was supposed to be at a fucking warehouse across the city.

Oh shit, Tommy had to go.

Chapter End Notes

Tommy, laughing: my plan is fool proof!! I am the conductor of the orchestra of doom!!
You are all my puppets! Nobody can stop my heist!!

Phil, patting his pockets and being an old man: I forgot my wallet. I need to go grab that.
Tommy: suprised Pikachu face

end of arc one

Chapter Notes

The tags are going to go through an update, so when you come back please be sure to check them. Also, the fic has now graduated to an M rating because this is taking a deep dive in the darkness with more depictions of violence and combat. So please keep yourself safe first and don't expose yourself to things that can upset you.

Unbeta'd

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy darted towards the window. Going through the castle would probably end in his death. It slid open easily under his sweaty palms. Shit. Shit, how long does he have before the crow summons Angel? Did he have a few minutes? Or a couple of seconds. Tommy didn't want to waste what valuable time he had as he leaped out of the room. His feet hit the singles, and he bolted.

The sun had fallen while he had been in the castle. And a moon was starting to drift up high into the sky, only a few clouds hung in the sky. Stars dotted above him. Numerous and blinking in the soft darkness. Tommy didn't have time to take in the sight. He reached under his jacket and pulled at the bandages that kept his wings folded tightly to his back. He might need them, whether to fly out or if he fucking fell off this shitty roof.

Despite Tommy's hopes, a shadow flashed above him. And Tommy barely had time to skid to a halt as a mass of darkness hit the rooftop in front of him, spreading its inky tendrils out like mist before collecting itself back to form a shape of a man. Yellow pinpricks of light, oh fuck they were his eyes, stared out at him.

Tommy's heart stopped in his chest.

Predator, the bird inside of his head screamed. *Predator. Run. Run!!* Tommy stared down at the other avian who stood on the roof. His hands were shaking and his adrenaline was flooding his system. It was hard to fight the bird off in his head. But he had to ignore his instincts now.

"Hello mate, care to tell me why you're in my territory?" The Angel of Death's voice clicked dangerously. Fuck. *Fuck.*

Tommy closed his eyes for a second and Saw.

When he opened them again, he had to *move*. A shadow was already moving. Curling in to trap him. Instead of running to the edge of the roof and leaping off, Tommy threw himself at the Angel. The first step sounded like the bell tolling his death. The second was heavier than

the first, but still, Tommy pushed forwards. His instincts screamed at him to *stop stop no no no no* but Tommy ignored it. Even though it made his heart ache and shake and feel like it would give up on him entirely. He had to keep going. It was like Tommy was trapped in slow motion, and yet everything happened so quickly.

The Angel of Death did not expect Tommy to leap at him either. Tommy could see the talons forming on the hands of the other. Could sense the danger as he came nearer. Could smell the blood yet to be spilled. The potential violence was heady and hung in the air.

Tommy flung his full weight at Angel and threw open his arms to curl around the man's neck. He could practically imagine the talons reaching for him, inches away from slicing his throat open. Sense them ready to stab in and cut at Tommy. With a harsh breath, Tommy opened his mouth and let out a *chirp*.

Flock.

Tommy's bird went *wild*.

No no no not flock! Predator!! Not flock!

But Tommy forced himself to make the same noise again. *Flock*, Tommy peeped.

And Angel's breath hitched. The talons were frozen, curled in the air to cut, and yet they did not move. And Tommy pressed in tighter to the hug, yes he was fucking hugging the Angel of Death, and made another small peep. The noise lingered in the air. Echoing around the two of them in silence. His body was shaking with terror. Fuck, Tommy was sweating like a piglin too. Icy hot and burning cold flashes raced across his skin.

This trick better work or else Tommy is going to fucking die. He let out one last little chirp, before moving. Angel was still horribly still, but Tommy knew he would not be for much longer.

And then Tommy snatched the hat off of the Angel of Death and *then* threw himself off the building. His wings curled out from under his jacket and caught the wind. Lifting him freely into the air. "Oh shit." Tommy whispered to himself, the noise was lost in the wind. "Oh shit oh shit *oh shit*."

Behind him, like a tidal wave, came the croak of a crow. There was one. Then there were three. And a hundred joined. All of their wings fluttering and beating at the air, creating a horrible cacophony that collectively took in a breath before *roaring*.

The Angel of Death took to the air after Tommy. The presence of a predator in the sky felt heavy and looming. Pressing down on Tommy in the air, and he knew that he wasn't going to be safe for much longer. If Tommy was in the mood to strike a joke he might even have started to hum the 'Jaws' theme song. But since he was the target... fuck.

The crows were faster than Angel. They shot at him like a torpedo. And Tommy shifted his weight and curved his feathers as he flipped around and avoided them. The birds could maneuver well, but all of them seemed to be a part of the same hive mind, forcing them to

stay in a massive group. If they had spread out and attacked Tommy individually then he was fucked. But they surged at him like one, and Tommy could use it to his advantage. It was a small chance. Tommy was fast and could be agile if he played his cards right. The odds were slightly stacked in his favor.

Then Tommy blinked and Saw-

He tucked his wings in and dropped like a stone, as a large clawed talon swiped at him from above. *Fuck!* Tommy didn't even hear Angel in the air. The moon was hidden behind clouds, and Tommy was flying blind. He couldn't even *see* the other avian in the air. Fuck. He opened his wings and darted towards the lights of the city below.

In the open sky, Tommy had no chance. He needed a small enclosed space to worm his way to safety.

A crow snapped its beak at his feet. And Tommy kicked at it, sending the bird off its course with a squeak. But it was the first of thousands. And they were gaining. Gathering up once again to surge at him like a tornado. He closed his eyes for a second and-

Tommy braked hard and turned to the left as far as he could. His wings beat rapidly as he banked. He hit a building with his knee scraping it and blood dripped down his leg. The sharp maneuver allowed Tommy to dart down between two buildings and he banked yet again a hard right as he exited the alley.

Flapping quickly to gain more altitude, Tommy's feet touched onto the building's rooftop and he bolted towards the door. Already the birds were croaking. Racing each other to meet his doom. Tommy slammed open the door and dropped down the stairwell, not even taking the stairs, he simply tucked his wings in and dropped down the narrow opening between the guard rails. Falling freely.

The crows sounded a bit fainter. But they were still hot on his trail.

Tommy snapped out a hand and caught one of the rails before he hit the ground. His wrist and arm screamed in pain as his inertia bounced him from the sudden stop. The metal bar nearly slipped from between his fingers, and Tommy grasped at it frantically with his other hand. He hauled himself over the top, and gave himself a second to See-

Then he was off again. Opening one of the metal doors and into a nondescript office. The lights were off, but he ran wildly across the floor, passing the numerous cubicles and computer desks. Tommy didn't hesitate before grabbing a metal paperweight off somebody's desk and chucking it at the window. It shattered into a thousand crystals, and Tommy was airborne again.

And then he repeated the step over and over again. Dodging behind buildings, even flying through the narrow gaps between them. Using the area around him to gain just a few more seconds between him and the *predator*. Just a couple of steps ahead. Rolling across a rooftop just to backtrack, the dark shadow mass of birds hitting the ground where he was moments prior.

Seconds ticked past, lengthening into minutes. Which slowly turned a clock forwards. Ten. Twenty. Thirty minutes. This was Tommy's specialty. Getting away. He had the greatest heroes after him before. And he could always find a way out.

But how could he run when the man after him controlled the shadows that Tommy would disappear into? Despite Tommy using every trick in the book, he was only one or two steps ahead of his pursuer.

It began to blur over time. The crows were never far behind. That meant Angel was still lurking around him. Hidden, and waiting to strike. Tommy ducked and wove through the air, doing fast loop-de-loops and dropping suddenly onto the ground, his legs protesting as his knees buckled. Every moment Tommy had to stop and See, he took. There was always a new trick and trap to avoid. Narrowly missing yet another barrage of birds. The crows were everywhere. And escaping felt nigh impossible.

But there was a chance. It was small. But it was still there.

The vision burned heavily in his mind. The sound of a phone ringing. The flash of color of a library that felt so familiar. The snap of a trap door. Tommy knew what he had to do- but the cost of forcing a vision to show him what he needed made him sway on his feet.

And Tommy could still make it.

Dodge left. Turn right. A light flashed across Tommy's face.

A crow cawed. Tommy flew under a bridge, hearing a dozen bodies behind him hitting the stone.

There was a warm light as Tommy flew into a window. A woman screamed as he came hurtling into her apartment. Dinner was on the table, and Tommy jumped over it as he raced to the front door. The plates crashed as they were knocked onto the ground.

A bird scratched his arm. Tommy punched it off.

His feet hit the ground and his lungs burned. Still running.

Tommy blinked and Saw-

-a small moment of respite.

He curled up in one of the tunnels at a park, meant for children to play in. Wood chips dug into his bloodied and ripped pants. But he didn't care. His breath was fast, and his heart had reached the hummingbird vibration levels of speed. His face and wings felt almost numb with adrenaline. Tommy's hands shook and fumbled as he reached into his pocket and pulled out an unused flip phone. His body shaking, jerking with the need to *keep going*. Instead, Tommy pressed numbers into the keypad and held it to his ear.

It rang twice before it was cut off.

Fuck.

Tommy tried it again.

It rang three times before it hit the dial tone.

Shit.

The third time was the charm. It had to be. Tommy was going to *die* and if his best friend *did not* pick up the phone then Tommy will haunt his ass-

“What?” Tubbo, glorious Tubbo, best friend and savior of Tommy’s life, snapped the word like a whip. “I told you not to bother me-”

“Hi Tubs, listen.” Tommy gulped down a breath of air. “Listen, I’m in a bit of a pickle. Super bad. Might die.”

“What the fuc- Tommy?” Tubbo sounded incredulous. “Tommy what’s going on? Where-”

“I don’t have time to explain. I only have maybe a minute left.” Tommy gasped out, “I really need some help. I need you, *as fast as you can*, to go back to Pogtopia. I have an ender pearl still in stasis from the war. Flip the trap door. It’s behind the library wall. Please, for the love of Prime, do it or I’m dead.”

“I’m already out the door,” Tubbo said, and sure enough Tommy could hear him running.

“Cool cool.” Tommy said, “listen. If things go wrong... I’m sorry. It’s shitty of me to say this right before I might die, but I am sorry. I should have listened to you. Instead of going behind your back, we should have come up with a plan together. And- and I wish I could have said it to your face.”

“You’re not dying,” Tubbo said, “and you can still say it to my face. I’m getting in my car and I am going to break *all* of the traffic laws to get to Pogtopia.”

“You’re the new president, you can’t break the law.” Tommy weakly protested.

Tubbo let out a laugh, “yes, yes I can.”

“Anyways, uh tell Punz he’s a bastard and let Purpled know I couldn’t get that shitty keychain to him. I got him one. I don’t think I’ll be able to give it, you know?” Tommy spoke quickly, “and tell Sam he was pretty great and I still think that he should have cup holders installed onto every single project he makes because it’s both handy and convenient.”

“Tell him that yourself.” Tubbo’s voice cracked.

“I don’t know, Tubbo.” Tommy admitted faintly, “I don’t know if I can. I’m pretty sure things aren’t going to go my way this time.”

“Bull. Shit.” Tubbo responded, “you’re the greatest thief in the world, Tommy. You make everything go your way.”

Tommy gave a weak laugh, tilting his sweaty head back to hit the plastic wall of the tunnel. "I'm sorry, Tubbo. But I think I need to say goodbye."

"Don't you dare-"

Tommy blinked back tears as he snapped the phone into two and tossed it. He could hear a crow caw in the distance. And he threw himself out of the tunnel and back into the air.

His worst fear came true.

Tommy's luck could not last forever. His agile dodges and evasions had to come to an end. He hoped that Tubbo could flip the trap door on the ender pearl before he died. It would fucking suck if his best friend teleported his dead body to Pogtopia. A crow managed to get in front of him and scratched at Tommy's eyes. He narrowly dodged, waving his arms up to protect his face, but it was enough for large black talons to sink their way into his shoulder, nearly to his bone, and toss him out of the air.

He fell like a limp doll.

Tommy let out a cry as he hit a brick wall and then fell straight down into an alleyway. Still fucking clean and shit. The dumpster was sparkling, for Prime's sake. Tommy shouldn't be noting down how spotless the alleyway is. But he was pretty sure he hit his head and everything was getting blurry.

Or maybe that was from using his powers too much. Tommy didn't have time to dwell on it.

The dark form of the predator avian dropped onto the pavement. A street light behind him made the shadow stretch across the ground and towards Tommy.

Wait.

No, that wasn't right.

Tommy threw himself to the other side of the alley, even though his body ached and screamed, as the shadow snaked forwards and spikes of darkness shot into the wall where Tommy had been seconds prior. Shaking his head, even though that made his vision worse, Tommy tried to refocus. Right. He had to keep moving.

The Angel of Death just stood there. Looming. His face was cast into darkness. His shadow twitched once more. It was all the warning Tommy as it jerked towards him. He threw himself onto the dumpster, avoiding yet another attack. The wall he had been leaning on had a giant gash in it, and broken bricks clattered onto the ground.

"Wait-" Tommy held out his hands in a T formation as he gasped out. "Time out!"

Funny enough... It worked. The shadow stilled, and Angel of Death cocked his head to the side. Tommy held his hands still, afraid that if he lowered them then the fight would resume.

“Hi, uh, Mister Angel of Death and Gloom and whatever.” Tommy tried to keep his tone light and airy, but it shook with adrenaline. And possibly blood loss. His throat was so dry. “This has been, uh, super fun. Great flight with you and all. But I left my oven on at home and-”

The shadow curled, and for a moment Tommy was certain it would slice him in half. But instead, it slunk its way back to Angel’s form like a cat, curling around his feet and returning into a dark puddle of ink. “Do you really think that would work, mate?”

Fuck, Angel sounded like a normal man. No deep voice like Techno, or the smooth timber of Wilbur. He sounded like a regular good old-fashioned Joe taken right off the streets.

“I mean, I kind of hoped it would?” Tommy laughed nervously, and the motion of it almost made him throw up. “It worked before on Time Keeper once when he caught me.”

“Karl let you go?” Angel sounded amused, and yeah, it was actually pretty fucking funny. Tommy could help but note that Angel was first name basis with Las Nevadas’ one Hero.

“Oh yeah. He told me to turn my oven off before committing crimes. He let me off with a warning.” Tommy couldn’t stop rambling the thoughts that raced through his head. *Come on Tubbo. Come on!* “So I mean, I guess since it worked before it has to again, right?”

Angel let out a thoughtful hum, “sorry mate, it probably won’t work this time.” He was calm and collected, and Tommy thought it was unfair how he reduced Tommy into a shaking puddle of exhaustion and the Angel looked like had been on a relaxed evening flight.

Tommy snapped his fingers, “damn. There goes my one shot. I don’t suppose there is any way I could live after this?” His heart was racing, and Tommy couldn’t stop shaking. But banter was the only thing that could never be forgotten. It was so ingrained in him that Tommy was certain he could joke even while in the grave. Gotta stall for as long as he could.

“Maybe.” Angel replied, “I haven’t decided whether or not I want to rip all your feathers out or pluck them slowly. Techno might appreciate adding them to his collection without blood all over them.”

Tommy’s wings twitched. “I mean, he is the Blood God.” Tommy replied, “although fuck me, I didn’t know that when I sort of accidentally kidnapped him.”

“You can’t accidentally kidnap a prince.” Angel snorted.

Tommy waved his arms around, “I’m sure it’s happened before. I didn’t actually want to confess to a crime to your face without some fluff to soften the punishment. You know?”

‘Tubbo, get your lazy ass to Pogtopia and flip the damn lever. Please please please.’

Angel hummed, and then took a step forward. Tommy flinched but found he couldn’t move. The bird inside of him finally took stock of the predator, and his limbs could only shake from exhaustion. “I liked what you did back there.” Angel of Death said, walking casually closer. “When you chirped at me, you really threw me for a loop. I hadn’t felt so off-kilter in a long time.”

“It wasn’t planned,” Tommy admitted, “just sort of happened, you know?”

“You’re quick on your feet then.” Angel was only a few feet away, and the shadows on the walls began to move. Tommy sucked in air as he felt the darkness grab onto him and *yank* . His body was once again thrown onto the ground like a doll. His vision was suddenly filled with pavement, and his body ached as it crumbled onto the ground.

Tommy didn’t have the energy to pick himself up.

“I can appreciate that. Prime above how many sticky situations I got out of by the skin of my teeth.” The shadows curled around Tommy like an octopus, and then he was lifted into the air. Tommy could only wheeze, the tight embrace holding him gripped him so tightly it made his ribs ache. “You could have made a very good soldier. No doubt Techno would have loved to keep you.”

Tommy shut his eyes. His vision was fucked. His head ached. But Tommy had to *See* . If there was any way he could get out of this, he had to know. But before he could push another vision, cruel talons grabbed his chin and lifted his head up. The sharp points pricked Tommy’s cheeks and drew blood. “Look at me.”

And the bird inside of him obeyed.

Tommy *hated* opening his eyes while he *Saw*. Because then he could *See everything*. All of the paths. All of the chances. Every moment played out over and over again with small changes.

Dark eyes, stars swirling in the depths, locked onto Angel’s. And Tommy could *See*.

-a toddler would walk past the opening of the alleyway, staring curiously at the dark stains on the ground without knowing that it was blood. They paused slightly, a question forming on their pouty lips before their parents pulled them forwards. The moment is forever forgotten in their small memory.

-a window to an apartment opened, letting in a breeze but allowing the soft music of a violin to caress the world outside. It was soft and sweet, yet sharp and full of longing. There was never a reply to the call for help the music cried for.

-a drunk couple stumbled into the alleyway in the hopes of getting handsy without being caught, giggling under their breaths as they-

-a police officer’s flashlight breaking up the darkness, peering into the cracks as if to solve the mystery of a crime.-

-an older man wearing a jumpsuit carrying a mop bucket sighed as he noticed the mess, “don’t people know how hard it is to keep these clean?”

-somebody throwing garbage bag into the dumpster-

-a loud truck moving past the entrance-

-a guttural yell-

-a phone ringing-

-a teenager walking past-

-the sun flashed overhead and then disappeared, and then again, and again, as days moved on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and-

Tommy closed his eyes as he felt golden tears leak down his cheeks and onto the claws that held them. He crumpled like wet paper. Any lasting energy was gone in the split second he had kept them open. Information overloaded his brain, and it felt full to bursting. But it gave Tommy the answer he needed.

There was simply no escape whatsoever.

“You,” there was a strangled noise, and Tommy opened his eyes. Primes, he could barely see. Everything melted into colors now, and dark spots threatened to overtake the rest of his vision. Everything was a blur. But Tommy could see the wide blue eyes staring down at him, and the claws that were cutting into his face loosened and the grip became soft. Almost caring. Bittersweet. Worshipful.

Then the Angel of Death whispered reverently, “*Kristen claimed you.*”

There was a snap as a trapdoor closed, and Tommy felt a tug around his middle before the world changed once again.

Tommy was underwater, bubbles brushing past him from the soul sand beneath. And he couldn’t *breathe*. Hands grabbed him. Steady, reliable, and careful. And they pulled him out of the water like a wet cat.

“Tommy?” Tubbo’s face was blurry. Just like the rest of the room. Tommy couldn’t- he couldn’t think anymore.

He couldn’t breathe anymore.

With a weak cough, he slumped into Tubbo’s arms and passed out.

Tommy was finally out of the Empire.

Techno opened the door to the car and swung out. The sun beamed brightly down on his head. The bustle of men in blue parted, leaving a direct clear path to the door of the ramshackle apartment building. For the first time in months, a cape flicked around Techno’s ankles and a crown is glinting on his head. It wasn’t his favorite crown. But it would do for the time being. He entered the building, his nose twitching at the faint smell of mold and dirt.

“This is where he holed up?” Techno asked, and Eret, the ever silent shadow at his heels, nodded.

“Yes, your highness.” Eret pointed up the stairs, “an apartment on the third floor. The door is open.”

“I want analysts to comb through every detail and to give me a final report by the end of the day. I want to know everything they can figure out.” Techno commanded, and Eret bowed.

“Of course, your highness.”

Techno did not respond. His boots stepped onto the cracked concrete of the staircase and headed upwards. He couldn’t stop tasting the air. Hoping for a hint- a *touch* of Theseus still lingered. Techno wanted his runt back.

It was disappointing that all he could smell was the stale air. The molding carpet of the abandoned building and the rank stains littered the place. They really should have knocked this building down ages ago, along with the other condemned buildings. And it would be rectified shortly, Techno was certain that by the end of the month this would be nothing but rubble.

Of course, it would only happen after all of the clues had been pried out of it.

Theseus was smart. Techno knew that from the start. But it didn’t fail to impress him how brilliant the boy really was. Stepping into the room that had been untouched save for a cursory glance through, Theseus’ genius shone. Papers were strewn across the floor. Some of them were pictures, well-known images taken off of the web of the members of the Syndicate. Techno stepped past an image of Ender, his protégé hunched over a body of a traitor with blood still smeared across his lips. Ranboo’s fangs were bared, staring into the camera with wild animalistic rage.

A wall had sticky notes and papers covering it. And Techno paused to peruse through them. The insight into the mind of Theseus was a powerful tool. They could weaponize it. Use it to predict what Theseus will do next. They could pick him apart easily.

Most of the papers were full of information that could be found readily on the internet. The Syndicates' powers listed out, their known weaknesses and strengths, which were few and in between, and what they looked like. A few odd notes, mostly insults directed at Wilbur, were added to them.

But there was a trail of sticky notes that caught Techno’s attention. It wasn’t rehashing the same information he knew- it was a mixture of symbols and writing. Almost incomprehensible to read separately. But put together it created a puzzle. Pieces were missing. But the picture was still barely legible. How curious.

Go left at the end of the corridor. Third door down.

The guard with the piercing has a grudge against the guard with blonde hair- incite riot?

*Angel will be in the warehouse- Siren distracted by political turmoil (heh bitch)- ~~Technoblade~~
Blood God will be with guards.*

I hate him I hate him I hate him I miss him I hate him.

STEAL EVERYTHING OF VALUE

Watch out for the camera hidden behind third statue in the hallway.

Trip wire might cut off my head so avoid that. [very unpog] maybe avoid going to secret vault thingie.

Wilbur Soot is a bitch and I cannot believe he fell for it lmao. Girls are Queens.

Techno read them all, reaching out and nudging a single paper out of the way to see a partially hidden picture of himself taken several years ago. A boar's skull obscured his face, as he leaned into the sword impaling a man. It was one of the more flattering pictures of Techno out there. And with a pleased snort, a smug smirk appeared on Techno's lips. Underneath it was a single word written. *Asshole*.

Theseus is still caught in the web that Techno has meticulously woven around him. He can try and hide from Techno, but he would never truly escape.

Techno will ensure it.

It barely took a glance to know this wasn't where the stasis chamber was that teleported Theseus out of Phil's talons. His birds found no lingering residue in the surrounding area where he disappeared, and stasis chambers were a well-known trick in the criminal underground.

Another hiding spot? Perhaps another abandoned building nearby? Soul sand was difficult to find in the Empire. The odds of Theseus getting his hands on one, and also an ender pearl, were very low. Techno doubted it.

Chances are, Theseus might not be in the Empire anymore. The thought curled through Techno's ribs, wrapping around his bones with fury. His fists clenched with anger. Theseus was out of their realm of influence. His *runt* is gone. *Techno's runt. Gold runt. Gone.*

Perhaps it is a good thing that they were opening their borders to the outside world after two decades of keeping to themselves. Techno would have preferred to wait until the older generation of civilians died out before doing so, but now it gave him a way to find Theseus once more.

Techno will bring him back to the Empire. Kicking and screaming. But safe in his arms.

A glint of light caught Techno's eye. And he turned to a worn-out desk filled with wrappers and more discarded papers. A dress was thrown over the side of the wood, and Techno only glanced at it in passing before finding-

Oh.

The vicious smile returned, curling across Techno's face. And a low, gleeful, chuckle escaped as he leaned down and picked the small object up. It was heavy. Surprisingly so. The brass

metal was cool to the touch, and he lifted it up to peer at the words carefully carved neatly into the metal.

“World's greatest thief, eh?” Technoblade laughed to himself. “Let’s see how good you really are, Theseus.”

The metal king chess piece mockingly stated three words carved in Theseus’ handwriting.

Kings To You.

end of arc one

Chapter End Notes

Thats it!! Finally. I can finally add Kristin's tag to this.

Kings Arc 2 will be postponed for a while- simply because I have a few things to work out and I want it to be perfect before I start posting things again! In the mean time, I have a few other fics that will be updated on my normal schedule. If you would like to know more, follow my twitter account listed below.

Interlude (part one)

Chapter Notes

Special thanks to [Houxe](#) for reading through this chapter and telling me it wasn't a pile of hot garbage that I thought it was. I really appreciate her help! Go check out her wolf fic! All stoves are safe in her fic, I promise.

WARNINGS FOR THIS CHAPTER, SO BE SAFE:

Loss of limbs. Minor character death. Angst.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Snow fell from the dark sky. They were invisible until they landed near the boy, like the sky itself was crying soft white flakes. Appearing from nothing, the unseeing dark abyss above him was black and the moon was missing from the sky. It was soft. Quiet. Peaceful. And unbearably cold.

Tommy sat next to the body of his mother.

Her long white hair spilled across the ground, matching the color of the snow as they began to land on her. Her skin was icy cold, and Tommy clutched at her hand. The only warmth came from him now. And soon, she would be like any other body in Manburg. Cast aside, and buried in a mass grave. If she was lucky.

The pain was agony. It raced up and down Tommy's back. And it overshadowed the numb feeling that was spreading through his chest.

The echoes of her screams still rattled in his ears. Tommy didn't cry. He couldn't. Not when everything was so cold. He shivered, and pressed up against his mothers body instinctively to find warmth. But there simply wasn't any left.

His back *hurt*. An awful lot. Like how it had hurt when Tommy's wings had come in, a few months prior. His mom had rubbed his back and put a lot of hot pads on it to soothe the pain. And Tommy let out a pained keen. He wanted Mama to softly croon and her thin fingers to knead at the bunched up muscles.

She made everything better. And Tommy's back really, really hurt. He pressed up against her, trying to hide his face. But the smell of blood was strong. And it was sticky. Coating Tommy's legs as he knelt next to her.

What Tommy really, *really* wanted was to curl up under his mom's wings. They were so big, and the crystalized feathers glinted in the light. Creating rainbows when the sunshine hit them just right. It was like Tommy was looking up at the stars when he sat in her embrace.

But they were missing. Gone. Tommy didn't know where they went. Instead of the comforting soft feathers, there was a pool of blood. It made his mother look... small. And incomplete.

Tommy let out a distressed chirp. Shuffling even closer as the temperature dropped. Mama was gonna fix it. She always did. Even when Tommy ripped a hole in his pants, she sewed it up and made it perfect again.

Mama was gonna fix everything. As soon as she woke up from her nap. She'd make everything right again. She'd make Tommy's back stop hurting so much. And she'll take him home to the soft warm nest she made and sing his booboos better. That's what mama's did.

The night seemed to press closer. And Tommy couldn't feel anything. The world was dark and the snow barely bounced the feeble light around. He didn't notice, curled up against his mother's side, how the shadows began to ripple and grow in size and the light faded away. Leaving the world monochrome and dark.

A figure appeared, stepping onto the cold sidewalks without a single sound. As if she was a part of the silent shadows that crawled over the world. A dark veil covered her head, pinned neatly to a wide brimmed hat. Two magnificent black wings curled around her bare shoulders, glittering with the dust of the cosmos.

Oh, how did she get up there? Tommy hadn't noticed her moving. "Mama?" Tommy says weakly, staring up at the beautiful woman above him.

There was a laugh, and a soft coo. "I can be your mother if you'd like, sweetheart." The tall woman says, leaning down to peer at Tommy with a stunning grin barely visible underneath the veil. "This is certainly a first to be adopted by a child. Usually, I'm the one choosing my children. And you are adorable. A little itty bitty Phil."

Tears finally appeared in Tommy's eyes. He could finally let her be in charge now. Tommy was so tired. "Mama," Tommy raised a shaking hand up at her, "Mama I hurt."

She let out a sad noise, falling to her knees before Tommy. The fabric of her dress fell into the wet snow. "I know, sweetheart. I can take the pain away. Okay?" And she held her arms out, "I'll take you away to a place you'll never feel pain again. It's a very nice place, I promise. You'll be very happy there." She leans forwards to embrace him-

Tommy hiccupped, "Mama, I can't feel my wings."

Mama stopped. Her hands stutter to a halt as a flash of emotions cross her face. Tommy let out a warbling chirp, and he looked up through the black veil and watched as a dark look appeared in her eyes.

His back hurt a lot. Even more than the time when Tommy's arm broke after he fell from the tree. He had been really really scared when the men took him and his Mama was screaming at them, and there had been a horrible flash of pain that made the world go white as metal clicked together. Tommy couldn't feel his wings after that. Only pain.

“Mama?” Hot tears were making their way down his face, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Please.” He wanted her to hold him. To let him bury himself under her dazzling wings. Where everything was safe and perfect again.

Mama slowly drew back, much to Tommy’s dismay. He chirped out his apologies. Reaching out his good arm to Mama. Why wasn’t she holding him? Why wasn’t she making things better? “No, I’m the one sorry,” Mama said, with tears in her eyes. Golden drops spilled down her cheeks, “I’m so, so, sorry, little one. You shouldn’t have had everything stolen from you. This is *wrong*.” She hissed out the last word, the anger flashing across her face. She had long white fangs, Tommy idly noted. He hadn’t noticed that about Mama before.

Tommy didn’t understand. And he let out a soft confused chirp. And Mama crooned back, and the tightrope in his chest eased slightly at the noise. Tommy’s eyes fluttered, and the cold around him was starting to get worse. “Mama,” he said, holding up his arm again. He wanted to curl up beneath her wings.

“I’m sorry.” Mama choked up, “I don’t think I will take you. Not when everything has been stripped from you, you deserve to keep something. I won’t let myself take what little you have left.”

“Don’t cry Mama,” Tommy said, “it’s going to be okay. I’ll kiss your boobos and it’ll be healed.” And then she can kiss his and it’ll all be fixed.

Mama laughed, “you are so bright. A beautiful little soul.”

She leaned down, pulling up her veil and placing a gentle kiss on Tommy’s forehead. A drop of a golden tear landed on Tommy’s cheek. She had stars in her eyes, Tommy faintly noted. And they were beautiful. “May you shine like the sun, Theseus.” She whispered against his hairline, before pulling away. “Until we meet again.”

“Mama?” Tommy could finally reach her. And he curled a hand in her silky dress, “you’re leaving me?” Why? A fresh new wave of tears filled his eyes. Mama was leaving him? But he was so cold! And his back hurt so much. She was supposed to fix things.

“I’m sorry,” she said, reaching down and wiping away the golden tear from his cheek. Her hand was warm. Tommy pressed his face into her palm, and her breath hitched. “You are delightfully sweet.” Her thumb brushed feather light against his skin.

“Will you come back?” Tommy asked, and the world was spinning like he had spun around too many times and he fell over when he got too woozy. “I- I don’t wanna be alone, Mama.”

There was a pause, and a quiet shuffle of fabric. Then Mama laughed wetly, “sure. I’ll come back for you, sweetheart. Mama will be here. Even if you can’t see me, I’ll be there. Okay? You’re one of mine now. And I do not abandon those I claim.”

“Okay,” Tommy’s eyes fluttered again. And this time it was really hard to open them again. “I love you, Mama.”

A pause.

“I love you too, my little chick.”

Something warm wrapped around him, silky smooth cloth that felt like a furnace. And Tommy sank into it. Hands curled underneath Tommy. Lifting him up into a safe embrace. Tommy let out a sigh, sinking into her arms. The sticky wet stuff on his back felt weird, and Tommy felt a cautious hand probe at the part where it hurt a lot. And he let out a distressed chirp as a new bolt of pain hit him. A soft croon made him relax.

“It’s things like this that make me want to see the world burn.” Mama whispers to herself. And then she gathered Tommy up into her arms, and the world shifted as she slowly stood. “But there are also things that are worthwhile to keep the earth alive that are irreplaceable. My little ray of sunshine.”

Tommy peered up at Mama, blinking sluggishly. His thoughts were jumbled and mixed up and now that Mama was going to take care of him it was okay to let her be in charge. The veil covered him now, leaving Mama’s face undisguised and close to Tommy’s. She smiled down at him, sharp white fangs contrasting the dark red lipstick on her lips.

“You don’t have to worry, Theseus,” Mama said, with her starry eyes and beautiful face. “I’m going to keep you now.”

It was dark.

A suffocating, yet, eerily comforting, black. It draped around Tommy like a curtain. His heart thundered in his chest, the memory- no the nightmare- was still too fresh in his head. It had been so long since he thought about his flo- *Kristin*.

Hearing her true name had brought back memories that Tommy hadn’t known he blocked out. Hell, he hadn’t even remembered that night until he was in the middle of the civil war. Too much bloodshed and screams in the air had brought back the recollection of his mother’s death.

That night was the first time Tommy drank alcohol. He had tried to forget it again. To put the memories back in that box and to toss it into the void.

It didn’t work.

And alcohol fucking sucked. Leaving Tommy hung over for and sluggish for days afterwards. It wasn’t pog to drink. He hasn’t touched the shit since.

His fingers curled up in the blankets. Feeling the soft cotton, grounding him. He was safe. He wasn’t in the Empire. He was in L’Manburg. Far, far away from the nightmare that plagued him.

Tommy knew that it would be hard coming home. But he hadn’t the foresight to see the *loss* that hollowed out his chest. It felt like one of his wings had been cut off. Leaving him unbalanced. Scooping out his insides and leaving him hollow.

The world had tilted on its side. And Tommy didn't know how to fix it. He raised his hands and scrubbed at his face. He needed something to do. Something to distract himself. The excitement that had pushed him to return vanished along with all of his plans.

Tommy was... *lost*.

He knew distantly he was going to return as a magnificent nuisance. He was going to tell people he was alive again. Taunt Dream and poke at Purpled, maybe break into Sam's workshop or something. He was going to have fun. Maybe steal a national monument just for kicks.

But what had been something to look forward to had drained away. Tommy didn't *want* to do it anymore. And it left him with nothing.

Nothing but time on his hands.

There was a soft knock at the door. And Tommy straightened up from his hunched form. The bandages wrapped around his torso shifted from the motion, squeezing uncomfortably. His wings puffed up from a sudden bolt of anxiety, but Tommy smoothed them down. "Yeah?"

"Hey, Tommy," Tubbo's muffled voice came from behind the door, "could I come in?"

"Sure," Tommy fingers fumbled to the edge of the bed, and he pulled himself to the side. The door opened, and Tommy heard Tubbo shuffle inside, closing the door with a click.

"How are you feeling?"

Empty.

"Pog," Tommy smiled, and the bed dipped as Tubbo sat down next to him. "My legs don't hurt as bad. Thanks for letting me stay with you for a bit."

There was a slight hesitation, "you know you're allowed to stay as long as you like?" Tubbo said, "I know things have been strained since..."

"Since I got exiled?"

"I- yeah." Tommy could picture what Tubbo was doing, fiddling with his fingers nervously. His brother in everything but blood had been with Tommy since they were kids at an orphanage. It might have been a while since Tommy had seen him, but Tommy knew Tubbo like the back of his hand. "We haven't talked since then. And I'm sorry for acting like a jerk. I really am, I shouldn't have said the things I said, and I regret it, every day."

Tommy blew out a huff of air. He reached out blindly and grabbed one of Tubbo's hands, "let's move on. We both did things we regret, and I'm tired of not talking with my best friend." As long as Tubbo didn't try to do the shit he was pulling on Tommy again, everything would be fine.

Tubbo squeezed Tommy's hand. "Yeah," Tubbo sounded choked up, "yeah that sounds good. I missed you Tommy."

“I missed you too, Tubs.”

And Tommy was suddenly pulled forwards into a hug. He felt Tubbo’s horn brush against his cheek, and he jerked his head to the side to avoid being skewered. “Watch the horns,” Tommy muttered, and Tubbo grunted out an apology.

After a moment, Tubbo pulled away sheepishly. “Sorry, I-”

“Nah,” Tommy shrugged, “big men need hugs, Tubs.” And Tommy was rewarded by hearing Tubbo laugh.

“I missed you.”

“Shut up,” Tommy reached and shoved at Tubbo, “now you’re just getting all sappy.” Tubbo laughed harder, and he pulled Tommy along as he fell back. The bed tilted and disappeared as the two fell off. Tommy barked out a surprised laugh as he hit the carpeted ground with a thud.

There was rapid movement as Tommy tried to grapple Tubbo, who was trying to do the same thing. Tommy’s hand wrapped around one of Tubbo’s horns and pulled. Tubbo grabbed Tommy’s wings in retaliation and Tommy was about to start mercilessly tickling Tubbo when the door opened.

“Uh-?” A soft voice said. An unfamiliar sound. Tommy stiffened, and he could feel his feathers bristling. “Sorry, did I-?”

“Boo!” Tubbo squirmed out of Tommy’s headlock and stood up. Leaving Tommy on the floor to awkwardly pick himself up. “Great timing, I wanted to introduce you! Tommy this is Ranboo, Boo, this is Tommy.”

Great. Lovely. Super pog. Who the fuck is this guy?

Tommy brushed at his shirt before holding out his hand, “nice to meet you.”

“Oh, yeah. Uh, nice to meet you too.” A cold hand lightly touched Tommy’s hand and gave it a small shake before recoiling.

Tommy’s eyes rose up, staring blankly into space. “You sound like a tall fucker.”

“I- what?” Ranboo stuttered.

“You are.” Tommy frowned, “how fucking tall are you?”

“I- what?” The newcomer said again.

“Don’t mind Tommy,” Tubbo reached over and tapped on Tommy’s back. “He can’t see anything right now.”

“I’m blind, bitch.” Tommy bit out, and he pointed in the vague area he heard Ranboo speak, “don’t you fucking treat me like glass. Got it? Or I’ll fuck you up.”

“Oh? I- I’m sorry. I didn’t know.”

“It’s okay, Boo. It only happens when Tommy is stupid and-”

Tommy swung his fist in the darkness, and he hit Tubbo. His friend wheezed from the pain. Tommy didn’t know where he hit him. But he was sure it was Tubbo’s arm or something, “it happens when I’m *tired*, thank you.”

“Yeah. Tired.” Tubbo agreed, “anyways, Boo, you said you wanted to meet Tommy.”

“You’re Thomas-?”

“It’s just Tommy.” Tommy crossed his arms and rolled his eyes. “I never liked the name Thomas.” It was a fake name. Thomas Redcoat, the disgraced and exiled former leader for L’Manburg. If Tommy ever found the reporter who ever coined that name, he would strangle them. Maybe frame them for a crime or shit.

Thomas Redcoat is such a shitty name.

“Oh!” Ranboo perked up, “I- I’m a big fan! I loved your work during the war, Fight For Liberty.”

Tommy snorted, the sound was ugly. “Is that what they’re calling it?”

“It wasn’t my choice, bud.” Tubbo patted Tommy on the back again. “The PR team said it had to be positive. Civil War was just too ‘negative’ apparently. I couldn’t fight it.”

“It’s a shitty name.” Tommy said mulishly, “can’t they call it something more pog? Like, ‘Fighting For Our Fucking Lives Because A Dictator Is Going To Kill Us All And We Have Cool Bombs.’ I think that would be so much better.”

Tubbo laughed, and Tommy heard a soft snort come from Ranboo. “You’re right, I should have thought of that.”

“So, Ranboob-”

“It’s Ranboo-”

“What do you do?” Tommy sat back down on the edge of the bed, “are you like, Tubbo’s bodyguard or-?”

“Oh,” Tubbo said quickly, “wait-”

“I’m his husband?” Ranboo said, and then, “oh, sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt you Tubbo.”

Tommy could hear a pin drop. He blinked. It did nothing, the world was still black. And slowly he tilted his head to the side. “I don’t think I heard you correctly. What did you say again, *Boo*?”

Tommy could hear Ranboo swallow roughly. His soft voice got even fainter as he said, “I’m uh, his- erm. Husband?”

“Huh.” Tommy said dumbly. “Okay, I’m going to make a blind joke now. I did *not* see that coming.”

The hardest thing was finding out that the world moved on without him. Tommy stared out into a blank space, unable to see anything, as a television droned on in the background. The words were haunting him. A news reporter was talking about the political backlash. And Tubbo turned the volume off after a little bit.

“I’m surrounded by politics, I don’t want to hear it while I’m not at work.” Tubbo says casually. And Tommy’s world was still flipping upside down. What the fuck? *What the actual fuck?*

“What... what did it mean when it said that L’Manburg was going to sign an agreement with the Antarctic Empire?” Tommy said softly, his ears buzzing. His unseeing eyes blinked in shock.

“You haven’t heard?” Tubbo says with surprise. “It’s been the talk of the last few months. But yeah, uh. After our marriage, I figured it would be smart to get some allies.”

“And the Empire was your first pick?”

“It’s where I’m from.” Ranboob says shyly, “do... you not like the Empire?” The question was a literal bomb.

Tommy had spent the last *lifetime* there. It felt like just yesterday he was in a shitty cabin with Technoblade. He *hated* him. Hated his stupid pink hair and shitty voice. Plus he was a *Prince*-

“No. No I’m just... surprised. The Empire is.. cool.” Tommy said casually, hoping his face didn’t give away his lie.

Tubbo snorted, “I don’t know what kind of rock you’ve been living under recently, Toms, but the Empire is a lot more than just ‘cool.’ Isn’t that right, Boo?”

“It’s a prosperous country.” Ranboob said, and Tommy might be blind but he could sense the nervous energy coming off of the guy. He was like a shaking chihuahua. “Since L’Manburg was the first to come forward and offer a treaty, the country is going to get the best deal out there. Free trades, shipping agreements, and the added benefit of having the Empire as a close ally. And since Essempii decided to join in, they’re also accepted with a pretty nice offer.”

“Wait-” *what the fuck what the fuck* - “Essempii is doing the same?” Tommy’s head was not computing this information. “I thought Dream would-”

“Dream actually came forward with the idea.” Tubbo said abruptly, “how about we change up the topic, huh? I’m sick of talking about this to people, and I just want to relax. I’m finally not at work.”

“Okay,” Tommy sighed, but he actually wanted to squeeze the entire story out of Tubbo. But he knew when to let the topic drop.

Tubbo can be explosive sometimes.

“So Tommy?” Ranboob said, “what have you been up to lately? I am just wondering because you, uh, seem tired?” His voice trailed off as Tommy’s face scrunched up.

“Oh, you know. Crimes!” Tommy said happily, “because I commit them! Did Tubbo tell you that I am a-”

Tubbo coughed loudly, “wow look at the time!”

“Shut it, fucker. You got married, and I’m not going to tiptoe around this.” Tommy rolled his eyes, “I’m a criminal. You got a problem with that, Underscore number two?”

“I actually took his last name,” Tubbo muttered, “it’s Beloved.”

“Ranboob Beloved?” Tommy laughed, “that’s hilarious.”

“I uh, don’t care that you’re a criminal? I mean, if you killed people that might be an issue? Or, uh, hurt others? I don’t know. I mean. I’m also a-”

Tubbo loudly coughed again, and Tommy rolled his eyes. “You need to get that checked, bitch.” Tommy poked in Tubbo’s general direction. “I figured this might be an issue since Tubbo hung up his mask and became a *beloved* hero to the masses.”

“Just because I decided to change career paths-” Tubbo sighed, and Ranboo interrupted him.

“You switched sides?”

Tubbo spluttered, “I was only a villain for like, three seconds. I didn’t do anything memorable.”

Tommy coughed into his hand this time, “nuked a town.”

“Shhh!” Tubbo punched Tommy in the shoulder, “it was *not* a town. More like a few buildings. And there wasn’t anybody in them. They were abandoned.”

“Ah yes, people were more concerned over the handful of buildings rather than the fucking mountain that got wiped out of existence.” Tommy said sarcastically.

“Wait, Tubbo you were the one who took out Mount Olympus?”

There was a muttered curse under his breath, and Tubbo finally spoke up and said, “yes. And for a good reason.”

“Fear mongering.” Tommy happily chimed in, “gotta make a dictator scared as shit! We needed to make him stressed as fuck so he’d get that delightful heart attack.”

Ranboo laughed quietly and then paused, “so, wait. I thought Schlatt’s heart attack was just a coincidence that helped turn the war. It was planned? How on earth did you know to do that?”

There was a slight lull in the conversation, and Tommy shrugged, “we uh, stole some medical documents. And we found out his heart was a ticking bomb.” The lie slipping off his tongue easily. “So we used it to our advantage. All is fair in war.”

“Wow, I heard that you were a tactical genius,” Ranboo gushed, “but I didn’t know that was planned! I just thought it was a stroke of good luck. That’s incredible, Tommy. The way you managed to turn the civil war around in just a couple of weeks was fascinating. I, uh, studied this. Along with my mentor. He followed along with the news and he thought you were very smart. He said he’d like to meet you one day.” His words trailed off shyly.

“Thanks.” Tommy’s smile was a touch too brittle. “But since I am considered a war criminal in L’Manburg, I will have to pass. Those days are behind me.”

“Oh, I understand. I don’t want to push you. Whatever you’re comfortable with,” Ranboo backtracked quickly, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine.” Tubbo casually drawled, “but you know, Tommy, that I can just... sweep that under the rug right? You don’t have to stay out of L’Manburg anymore. I can sign the documents tomorrow. Easy.”

Please no.

Tommy’s hands suddenly itched, and he curled them tightly on the blanket in his lap. Hiding his nervousness. “I don’t want people to think that you’re abusing your power. I’m pretty sure it’s widely known that we were friends.”

“Eh, people are already calling for my head because of the treaty business. What’s one more? I can just text one of my employees and have them draft up an official pardon and-”

“No.” Tommy said just a touch too loudly, and winced. “Sorry, I can, uh, *see* this turning out badly. You know?”

There was a pause. Tubbo was the only person in the world who knew about Tommy’s power. And he flatly replied, “yeah. Okay. Whatever you say, Tommy.” He didn’t believe Tommy.

There was a type of trust that came with Tommy’s orders, if Tommy said it would turn out bad then don’t do it. After the war, Tubbo came to trust Tommy’s word like it was law. If Tommy said to stand on one foot and pat his belly three times, there was always a good reason for it.

Of course, Tommy was totally fucking lying his ass off right now. He wouldn’t use his powers, not when he was fucking blind as a bat. Not now. Tubbo knew that. Tommy knew

that he knew that.

But Tubbo still, thankfully, dropped the issue. The weight of his eyes were heavy on Tommy's back. Burning a hole from the strength of their look. And Tommy's feathers fluffed up before he smoothed them down.

Honestly, his fucking wings were such tattle tales. Absolute bitches, they were.

"Speaking of the time," Tubbo says, changing the subject once more, "Boo, why don't you go get Michael? I'd love to introduce him to Tommy."

"Right!" Ranboo stood up, "I'll be right back."

"Who's Michael?" Tommy asked, "don't tell me he is *another* surprise husband."

Tubbo snorted, "no. You'll see."

"I won't. I'm blind."

"Ha," Tubbo flatly snorted, "I didn't miss your jokes. Michael is... good. Amazing, Tommy."

"That's not totally suspicious at all."

"Trust me," a hot heavy hand came up and rested on Tommy's neck. Tubbo leaned in and whispered, "I haven't led you astray yet."

A shiver ran down Tommy's spine. And he tried to shy away from the touch, "I recall a certain moment when you, uh, ran into a dumpster." The words were hard to think, not when Tommy could feel Tubbo's hand on his neck. Pressing down. Keeping him still like a clamp.

Trapping him.

(It felt like Techno holding him down, and Tommy had to kill the longing that began to bud in his chest.)

"That was when we were *kids*." Tubbo complained with a huff.

"I mean. By law we still are."

"I haven't been a kid since, you know." Tubbo sighed, and he came closer. Sliding his arm over Tommy's shoulders. Pulling him into a half embrace. His voice grew soft and full of emotion, "I've missed you, Toms. Why can't you stay this time? Why can't you just come *home*?"

Prime, it hadn't even been a *day*. Tommy had hoped for a longer period of time before Tubbo started to demand things again. There was a reason Tommy *enjoyed* being exiled. But he wasn't going to try and protest this, not now. Tommy wasn't in a position to fight back. He'll put it aside for later.

Tommy slowly sank into Tubbo's side. Relaxing into the hold. And Tubbo hummed happily. Curling around Tommy, until they sat on the couch in a tangle of limbs. It was achingly familiar. They used to curl up with each other like this all throughout their childhood. And Tommy missed this. A lot.

He missed how life used to be when things were simpler.

"Sorry," Tommy said with a sigh, "it's just... hard." The easiest defense falling from his lips, "after seeing the possibilities from the war it's hard to tell what happened and what didn't. And there is just," he shivered, "so much blood." Tommy had used this excuse before.

Tubbo curled protectively around Tommy. He might be smaller than Tommy's lanky form, but he seemed to cover him from any danger, "I understand." He said brightly, "that's why I'm remodeling pretty much everything. Renovations are almost complete. You won't even recognize half the places."

Well *fuck*. "Oh, that's- cool. That's really cool." Tommy said, his mind spinning for a new excuse. "You really didn't have to."

"Nonsense." Tubbo's grip got a little bit tighter, "we both fought for our home. For freedom. I'm making it livable for you. You should at least enjoy what we bled for."

"Thanks Tubs." Tommy said, and Tubbo made a happy bleat. And he tapped his horns against Tommy's forehead.

"Anything for my best friend." Tubbo said fondly, and Tommy felt like he was digging his grave deeper.

Shame pricked at his neck. Tommy wanted to say no. But Tubbo had already put in so much effort and time into doing it, he didn't want to crush his hopes and dreams. Yeah it sucked to be apart from Tubbo. But it was for a good reason.

Tommy wasn't happy here.

Tubbo couldn't let him go. He already thought Tommy was like spun glass, ready to shatter at the slightest noise. If he could sucker Tommy into staying, how long would it be before Tubbo started to take over? Demanding things. Asking for *perfection*.

It had happened once already. And Tommy was his own man, thank you very much. In fact, the largest, biggest, incredible man out there. He loved being free. And the thought of a cage around him made him nervous.

The door opened again, and Tommy felt a crashing sense of relief. Listen, he didn't know how to *tell* Tubbo that he was just... too much these days. He ruled L'Manburg, he shouldn't be spending so much effort to drag Tommy back when Tommy clearly didn't want to. He had other important things to do than Tommy.

"I'm back," Ranboo announced merrily, "oh, uh, or I can go?"

Tommy took the chance and shoved at Tubbo, “come on, lemme meet this ‘Michael’ person. Let me up.”

Tubbo’s grip twitched, before he reluctantly released Tommy. Allowing Tommy to pry himself up out of the twisted mess of limbs. Tommy’s wing’s flailed as he dragged himself upright, and he heard a squeaking snort.

It was *familiar*.

Horribly familiar.

“What was that?” Tommy said in a hushed whisper, freezing. Fear curling down and sinking like lead in his stomach.

“That,” Tubbo said, grabbing Tommy’s hand and pulling him to stand. “Is my son, Michael.”

It took a few seconds for it to sink in. “Wait, *what?* You have a-”

“Son!” Tubbo was bouncing as he led Tommy over to where Ranboo awkwardly stood. “Come and meet him.”

“That noise-” Tommy said, and Tubbo cut him off.

“It’s fine. Michael, I want you to meet your Uncle Tommy.” Tubbo’s voice softened, and he lifted Tommy’s hand up. And a soft touch took all of Tommy’s focus.

A small hand gently grabbed Tommy’s, and there was a soft snorting squeak again. And Tommy had to hold back the flinch that came with it. Prime, why was that noise making him react like that?

Pushing it aside, Tommy smiled and gently said, “hi Michael. Your dad is a jerk.”

Tubbo flicked Tommy’s ear. “Ow! What? I’m sayin’ the truth.”

The small hand tightened it’s grip on Tommy’s fingers. The fingers were so tiny. “How old is he?”

“He’s three.” Ranboo said happily, “we adopted him two months ago.”

“Da- uh, dang.” Tommy caught himself, he probably shouldn’t swear in front of the kid. “That’s amazing.”

There was another squeaky breathy snort. And Tommy cocked his head to the side, “what does that mean?”

“Michael is still learning Common.” Tubbo said, “he was abandoned in the nether. So he still mostly speaks piglin.”

Tommy’s breath caught in his throat. “He’s-” *a piglin?*

“Yeah, but he’ll get the hang of things soon enough.” Tubbo said, brushing Tommy off. “He’s *adorable*, Tommy.”

“I uh, think that what he’s saying is roughly, ‘gold, mine?’” Ranboo spoke up. “I don’t know a lot of piglin but I can pick up a few words. He seems to really like your wings.”

Prime. Tommy felt like slapping himself. Hell, he still wanted to. Because that noise- *that noise* is what Technoblade would make. Like, fucking *all the time*. Tommy had thought it was just like, the piglin equivalent of clearing their throat or some shit. Because Technoblade would make it constantly.

The entire time, he had been calling Tommy *his gold*.

Tommy almost felt sick at the revelation. His hands began to shake, and he stepped away. The tiny fingers falling away from his. There was a distressed squeak. “Uh, sorry.” Tommy could feel his wings starting to flutter in his agitation. Traitors. “I’m-? I’m suddenly not feeling too hot.”

“Oh no,” Tubbo’s hand grabbed at Tommy’s elbow, and it took everything Tommy had to not deck him right there. The sudden touch made the bird inside his head freak out. Tubbo wasn’t *flock*. “Here, I’ll take you back to your room.”

“Kay,” Tommy agreed, he couldn’t argue even if he wanted to. He needed *space*. And his room was probably as good as it would get. Normally he’d hate it if Tubbo led him around like he was blind. Okay, so he was right now. But that didn’t mean he couldn’t walk down a straight hallway without Tubbo hovering over him.

The darkness was starting to close in. And Tommy *hated* it. The second Tubbo brought him back to his room, Tommy made up some kind shitty excuse and collapsed onto the bed. Tubbo didn’t stick around after standing in the doorway for a minute.

It felt wrong. Tommy’s skin itched and felt too tight. He scratched at his arms, and it helped a bit. But the bed was *wrong*. Tommy let himself fall into his instincts, letting the bird rip the bed up and replace all of the sheets and blankets until a small nest appeared. The only thing that was missing was his flock-

No.

Tommy would be fine *without* Technoblade. He curled up with a pillow between his arms and squeezed it tightly. He is an independent big man. He didn’t need Technoblade. Flocks were for pussies. And Tommy was going to be *okay*. Things will be hard, but it’ll work out.

Everything had to work out. Eventually.

Three days later, when Tommy gained a foggy amount of vision in his left eye, he bailed. Leaving a note behind for Tubbo, knowing it would probably make him pissed as hell. Tommy couldn’t care less.

He needed to go *home*.

Chapter End Notes

Hello! It's been a hot minute.

So I wrote arc 2. And then, I hated it so much I scrapped pretty much all of it and rewrote it. 18k down the drain. But thank you for your patience. I have decided to officially adopt to a new upload schedule which is this: whenever I feel like it. I don't think I can keep up with a regular update schedule. It's pretty stressful. But that doesn't mean I won't update frequently, I have some other fics that I will post eventually, along with Anarchist Child which is a funny baby fic if you're interested in that.

Check me out on my twitter and discord for more details!

Comments asking me to update will be ignored and/or increase the time that it takes for me to upload again. I'm not joking.

Interlude (part two)

Tommy woke up with tears in his eyes and his breath catching in his throat. *Flock?* He cries out, his hands flying out to touch the blankets around him. Searching for warmth that wasn't there. Finding nobody but empty space.

He felt sick. His arms and legs shook, like he had just completed a marathon. His heart was thundering in his ears, and he stumbled to his feet. Nearly falling over as he fumbled over the blankets and fabrics of his nest until his bare feet hit the wood floor.

The ground was swaying. Back and forth. And blindly Tommy stumbled his way to the bathroom. Clipping his hip on the counter as he passed by, and he almost fell over until he hit the wall. He used the cool surface as a guide until he hit the bathroom, his hand flying up and flicking the light switch on.

Color's were shapes. Shapes were things. And Tommy's eyes were still fucked up. Kind of. He could see things that were closer to his eyes better than far away. He leaned his entire weight on his elbows, reaching up and throwing the tap on. Cold water, blessed cool water, flowed freely. And Tommy splashed it over his face until he could actually *think*.

Water dripped down his face and into the large t-shirt he wore for bed. Tommy didn't care. He splashed more water across his face, and missed by a long shot, the front of his shirt becoming soaked. He shakily gasped for air, like a diver who held their breath for far too long.

Breathe in for four. Out for seven. Don't think about him. Repeat.

His wings dragged on the ground. Tommy pressed his forehead to the edge of the sink, the buzzing dysphoria making him feel faint. He could see, fuck. His feathers brushed against his ankles, and the ache in his wings felt so real.

He had them. He could touch them. Feel them. Stretch them out wide and feel the wind under his feathers. Tommy had his wings.

But he didn't have his flock.

Fuck. Tommy wasn't *thinking about him*.

The tap was still turned on. And water fell into the drain. Wasted. But Tommy couldn't care about that. Not when-

He closed his eyes. He can feel the edge of the sink against his forehead. The water slowly making it's way to drip off of his nose. The fabric of his shirt plastered to his chest. He could hear the water and the short and shaking breaths that he tried to control. He opened his eyes, and his vision swayed. He could see his feet. And his sleep shorts that came to his bruised and bandaged legs. The brass feathers that brushed against the floor, collecting the dirt and dust on the floor.

Tommy was *home*.

Slowly, he reached up and shut the water off. The lack of noise making his ears ring. When his stomach stopped churning, Tommy pulled himself up right. His back aching and the blood was rushing to his face. But it helped ground him.

Everything was *okay*. He's home. He's at his nest. He's safe.

Tommy met his reflection in the mirror. He looked so thin and pale. He needed to start working out again. He sat on his ass for five months, and now it was time to get back into shape.

It was going to fucking suck. Tommy could already feel the burning in his lungs. But he had to be fit if he wanted to pick things back up where he left off.

Wet hair fell onto his forehead. And Tommy felt a flash of annoyance. He was *long* overdue for a haircut. He met his eyes in the mirror, the pale blue bringing out the dark shadows under his eyes.

Flock wouldn't like it if he cut his hair.

"Fuck." Tommy hissed, his lips curling back to show off the sharp canines. "Fuck him. Stop it. I am not thinking about him."

The bird in his brain angrily rose it's head from it's nest. *Flock! Need flock! Where?*

"No!" Tommy snapped out, pointing a finger at his reflection like it was the bird. "We don't fucking need him. He's a bastard! You *know* what he did to us."

Technoblade *betrayed* Tommy.

But Tommy could feel the bird not understanding. It was like a toddler. Angry for one day, and then simply forgetting why they were so mad. Tommy wanted to stay in that rage. To drown in it, to remember that Technoblade *used* Tommy. Technoblade is a prince. A fucking supervillain. He could've killed Tommy in a few days, but instead he decided to play house with Tommy. To fool him. To make Tommy believe that he was... *different*.

He's flock! The bird chirped out, ignoring Tommy's anger. *Flock needs to be in nest!*

"Never." Tommy hissed out. "We are better off without him. He lied. About *everything*." Technoblade wasn't the first person who wanted to keep a songbird. The fucking jewel like feathers were a rarity. And it was worse that Technoblade saw his shitty bronze wings as gold.

The piglin hybrid would want a nice golden pet to flaunt around.

A surge of anger made Tommy make a split decision. His fingers fumbled to the drawer pulling it out completely and letting the contents inside fall onto the tiled floor with a clatter. He cursed at the mess, ducking down and kicking the tube of toothpaste to the side as he grabbed the pair of scissors.

The bird screeched as Tommy pulled on a lock of golden hair and began to saw at it. *No! Flock won't like it!*

"Fuck him. Fuck you." Tommy snarled, as the first chunk of hair fell to his feet. "I hate him. I *hate* him." Another clump. And another. The bird fell silent. Tommy didn't stop until his hair was barely curling around his ears. It was choppy as hell.

Tommy had been planning on running errands later. He'll stop by a barber and fix this. But for now, the vindication surged through him. He wasn't going to listen to what Technoblade wanted. Not anymore. He was his own man. He's slowly taking back pieces of himself. Reclaiming Tommy Innit once more.

It didn't last very long.

"I hate him." Tommy said once more with conviction, but it was hollow. He tried to ignore the lie on his tongue. If he said it enough, maybe it'll become true. "I hate him." He whispered, leaning against the sink as his energy left him. Tears pricked at his eyes. "*I hate him.*"

But that wasn't true.

The building is entirely unremarkable. Made out of bricks, the shop windows held nothing but a sign saying 'out of business' in faded red letters. It rested in the middle of a dozen other brick buildings, all of which were rarely visited. And Tommy shakily parked the stolen car three blocks down from it.

It had been months since Tommy tried to drive. It had been a mistake. Every time he got behind the wheel he vividly remembered why he hated driving. Damn pedestrians were always in his way. Crossing the street when Tommy had to turn. Didn't they know that Tommy has to drive and therefore he has the right of way? They look at Tommy and walk *slower*.

Pricks. All of them are fucking pricks.

Tommy slumped in the chair before getting out and wiping the steering wheel of his prints. The beat up old chevy was probably worth only a couple hundred bucks, it was an old truck that Tommy stole on the sole fact that nobody would really care if it was missing. He was surprised it ran when he tried it.

Still, he never took a chance. He never left a trace. The old key ring he found under the visor of the truck were placed back where he found them. And he made sure that he didn't leave anything behind for somebody to notice anything out of the ordinary.

His ribs ached from the bandages he wrapped around his wings. Tommy bound them up tightly. So the shape of them weren't apparent as he donned a heavy jacket. He couldn't breathe and bend very well, awkwardly standing up straight. It had been hell at the barber,

who chattered at Tommy as he fixed up the shoddy haircut he gave himself. The nape of his neck felt oddly open due to the lack of hair, a breeze brushing past and making him shiver.

Thankfully, his destination wouldn't require Tommy to explain himself as to why he was wearing a warm jacket in the middle of the summer. The derelict buildings were empty. And graffiti marked the walls, odd phrases here or there along with art pieces dedicated to the heroes.

Tommy's eyes caught on one that was of Sapnap. The hero with his limbs lit on fire. Looking off into the distance. Tommy cracked a smile because Sapnap's nose was hilariously larger than the rest of his face. And he huffed a laugh to himself, crossing the street and pulling his hood up over his head.

Normally, Tommy never came through the front door. He once said that front doors were for pussies. And he still stands by that statement. However, Tommy will make a simple exception this one time. And the reason was because he couldn't heave himself up into a air duct and shimmy his way in with two fucking wings on his back.

Thankfully, that issue would be resolved soon.

The security in this area was poor, and Tommy took advantage of it regularly. But there were always more cameras being set up and taken down. The disadvantage of setting up a home shop and letting both heroes and villains know the location.

It wasn't like the cameras worked, but fuckers still tried their hand at finding out information. Tommy eyed a white van as he passed by, noting the satellite dish on the top.

Fucking spies.

He kept his head down and the hood covering his face as he jumped up the three steps and opening the door. The sign on the knob firmly stated '*closed*' but the door was hardly ever locked.

It was free for entry. That was the only thing that didn't cost money.

This was neutral territory. And Tommy had to play by another's rules. He pushed his itching fingers in his pocket, just to keep them to himself. Tommy would never steal. Not from Punz. That would be burning bridges that Tommy had carefully set up ages ago. But it was good to keep the temptation at bay. A bell jingled above Tommy's head, and he let the door close behind him with a heavy thud.

Despite the ragged exterior of the building, the inside was rather luxurious. The cool air of the AC washed over Tommy, and he breathed in a sigh of relief. He was sweating *buckets*.

There were a few couches spread out around, and four glass displays that held priceless wonders. Sure, the materials were a bit shoddy. Tommy glanced at a pair of old and worn boots that still had mud encrusted on the bottom of their soles. But it wasn't what they were made of that counted, it was what they were *combined with* that was important.

Enchanted gear.

Fucking legendary shit. Tommy had a pair of boots that cost him an arm and a leg to get, but it made his footsteps silent. Even if he was tap dancing, not a single sound was made.

These things looked like garbage. But their price was in the *millions*.

There were only two people who could make enchantments. And one of them was a fucking goody goody hero, Warden. Even Sam wouldn't let Tommy near his items. Despite their semi-friendly terms. And the other could... be persuaded to let you buy them. For a steep price. Punz.

One of the most money hungry villains Tommy had ever met. Sure, Tommy had loads of money from his heists. But Punz? Punz must have *billions* by now. And he always continued to up his prices. The demand for enchantments was incredibly high. And it wasn't like there was another competitor that Tommy could casually place orders with.

Sure, Warden is nice and all. Tommy liked the guy. He needed to build more things with cup holders though. But he wouldn't let Tommy steal something useful. It was always the knicknacks. His fucking AI that lived in the building snitched on Tommy whenever he got too close to the gun safe.

Tommy wanted a laser gun. And by golly, he is going to get one... *one day*.

Admittedly, Punz also tried to create his own enchantments. Some of them worked super well. Like the anti-water necklace he let Tommy try out. Tommy could get dunked in the ocean and the water would part like he was that one Egyptian guy with the stick.

But then again, Punz would create something like the cuff Tommy used and it clearly *didn't work*.

Tommy wondered if Punz noticed it was missing yet. Or if Purpled claimed the prototype got 'destroyed' somehow. He was dreading a hidden surprise bill that Punz would slap on him.

That cuff was only supposed to be borrowed, afterall.

Somehow returning a piece of crushed iron that Techno had somehow *ripped off* with little effort would not appease Punz anger. It might only increase the bill.

Tommy eyed some of the new artifacts in the case. Tommy knew some of them already. With the high prices, not a lot of people could easily afford them. And they mostly stayed in the case for a few years before Punz managed to find a seller. And others were new.

Still, he had somebody to visit. Shopping would come later.

He brushed past the front counter, the gleaming bell on it just begging Tommy to ring it. But he had special privileges! The runes on the back door glowed slightly, but the light faded as Tommy passed through without incident. Not just anybody could pop into the back shop.

Music reached Tommy's ears as he entered the lab. Facing away from Tommy, hunched over a workbench with a pair of shears in hand, was Purpled. He didn't notice the new addition to the room.

That is, until Tommy tossed the shitty keyring onto the table in front of him.

Purpled jumped with a shriek, tumbling off the stool and onto the ground. The shears hit the floor with a clatter, and he stared up with wide purple eyes at Tommy.

"*You?*"

"Hi!" Tommy chirped, a bright and innocent smile on his face. "Long time no see!"

"*YOU?*" Purpled shrieked again, pointing a shaking finger at Tommy. "What the *fuck?*"

"That's pretty rude, innit?" Tommy tsked, "I'm just coming by to see my old buddy and you curse me out. Damn."

"You-" Purpled scrambled to his feet and tackled Tommy. "Asshole! Where the hell have you been?"

"Around." Tommy grunted as Purpled squeezed as tight as he could. The bindings already made him short of breath but Purpled simply stole the rest of his lung capacity.

"I thought you *died*." Purpled said, his voice muffled. "You didn't come back. What the hell Red. I thought this job finally got you."

"Nah! Nothing can kill me! I'm too poggers for that." Tommy scoffed, finally prying himself out of Purpled's grip. "I'm the world's greatest thief! Nothing can stop me."

The door slammed open and Punz whirled into the room, one palm sparking and hissing as a giant ball of lightning was aimed at them. Tommy and Purpled screeched and clutched each other, falling over in a pile of limbs as both of them tried to get away from certain death.

"Oh, it's you." Punz said mildly, and lowered the weapon. The two boys on the ground groaned from the new bruises they gained. "Get the fuck off my floor before I charge you."

Punz was a genius artificer. He wasn't as powerful nor well funded as Warden was. But Punz kept his nose up. The fact that he didn't care who he sold his wares to made him a valuable ally. To everybody.

Tommy poked at the dozens of iron jewelry. The runes carved into them were not identical. Each of them were hand made. And that made all of them slightly different. All of them very shitty looking. "Any of these hide hybrid traits?" Tommy asked, eyeing one that would cost more than two heists combined.

Punz sold things to both heroes and villains. But that didn't mean his prices were cheap. If anything, they were worth more than the painting Tommy had stolen some months back. Enchantments were rare. Good enchantments that wouldn't explode while you used them were golden. And Tommy needed to get his hands on something to replace the woven bracelet that had been sacrificed to the flames months prior.

"These will," Punz gestured to a set of necklaces sitting on the plush fabric. None of them had jewels. And if Tommy hadn't desperately needed to find something to make his wings disappear, he wouldn't have given the jewelry a second glance. They were... unappealing. To say the least. Shoddy. That's the word Tommy would use. They were fucking shoddy. If the enchantment hadn't been on them, Tommy would have tossed them into the garbage.

They weren't even *gold* for heaven's sake. Or silver. Or any precious metal. It was just... iron.

Tommy peered at the few necklaces. And with a calculating stare, he picked out one that looked the least shitty. The chain was at least a high quality. The pendant dangling from the end was... decidedly not.

"How much," Tommy said, with a sigh.

"Five."

"Million?" Tommy glanced up to double check. And with a nod, Punz grinned at him. Tommy muttered under his breath. It was a hefty chunk of change. But again, getting this sort of thing was unheard of. It wasn't like Tommy couldn't afford it. He had cash stashed everywhere.

Damn Technoblade for burning his bracelet. It was *important*.

"I'll take it." Tommy sighed again, and Punz nodded. Picking up the necklace and pulling out a box to place it in. A new idea popped into Tommy's head. Might as well ask while he's here. "Do you happen to have another enchantment in stock?"

"I have many," Punz said, and Tommy hummed. Tommy's phone buzzed in his pocket. He didn't glance at it as he declined the call.

"I might have... made some new enemies." Tommy leaned up against the counter, "I was wondering if there was an enchantment that could prevent them from using their powers on me?"

"What powers do they have?" Punz leered, eyes sparkling for information.

Tommy wasn't a fucking idiot. He might be on friendly terms with Punz. But there was more than just one thing Punz sold. Information. "The kind that can control my body." For both Siren and Technoblade's ability. "You know. Mind stuff. Maybe brainwashing or shit like that. I don't know exactly how it works. But one second I was chill, the next I was flat on my back. My heart felt... strange. Like they pulled on it."

That might have been too much information. But Tommy needed... *something*. A safety net.

With the Empire opening the borders, the idea of that making Tommy feel nauseous just by thinking about it, the chances of stumbling across one of the Syndicate just became a lot higher. His paranoia was rising up.

Techno had to wave his hand and Tommy would fall over. Siren was worse, he could hum and Tommy would be a slave under his power. At least Tommy could run from the Angel. And look how that went. It was sheer *luck* that allowed Tommy to escape alive. He was intimately aware that he wouldn't leave that alleyway in one piece. He had Seen it.

His hand came up and touched his jaw where the Angel had gripped it tightly, forcing Tommy's eyes open as he summoned a vision. Talons dug into his face, almost piercing it. And Tommy swallowed hard. If Tubbo hadn't gotten there in time-

All the more reason why he needed to have some kind of protection.

Punz hummed, thinking. His snake-like eyes narrowed in thought. "I might have something for that." Punz said, turning around. "But it isn't something I would offer easily. You see, that kind of particular enchantment comes with a drawback I haven't circumvented yet."

Tommy's phone vibrated again. "What does it do?" He asked, as he fumbled to decline the call again.

"I offered this same enchantment to Dream," Punz turned around, and nestled in a little box was a thin ring. The thin metal band had dark runes etched into it. This was Tommy's saving grace, and he couldn't help but lean closer. "But he turned it down when he saw what it did. Too much of a risk."

"What's the catch?"

"It has curse of binding." Punz said, and Tommy jerked back. Punz looked amused by Tommy's reaction. His lip curled up into a smirk. "Yeah, that's what Dream did too."

"*Binding* ? That shit is *so illegal*. And Dream let you keep it?" Tommy said, giving it a cautious stare like it would blow up if he so much as breathed on it. Honestly it could.

Binding was *a fucking curse*. The shit was so wrong in all the worst ways. There was simply no way to get it off. Death was the only cure.

They only put the worst scum on the planet in chains with curse of bindings. Even then, the public hotly debated if it was ethical to do it. The secret of making the enchantment was fucking *mythical*.

Holy *shit*.

"Sapnap was with him and dragged him out before he violated the rules." Punz said, and smiled gleefully. A golden tooth glinted in the light. "This ring will prevent any type of powers affecting you. But that also includes any type of healing potions, teleportation- ender pearls included- that kind of shit. It's powerful. It nullifies *everything*."

“Does it limit my own power?” Tommy asked, his heart pounding. Because this is what he *needed*. His hands itched to take it. But the *danger* that it presented.

It was a double sided sword. It’ll cut him and make him bleed before he ever saw any use of it. But it granted him immunity.

“No. It allows you to use whatever power you have. But outside influences are not accepted.” Punz said, shrugging. He snapped the box closed and turned away, “I understand if you don’t want it-”

“No.” Tommy jerked forwards, hand stretched out. It came with such a heavy cost. But it would be worth it. If Tommy ever encountered Technoblade again, he would need it. He didn’t know what Technoblade would do if they ever crossed paths again. Kill him? Take him as some kind of fucked up prize?

Songbirds were always treasured. The black market was always hot for one. It was protection, if not from the Syndicate, then from other villains who’d take a look at Tommy and see a lottery ticket.

“How much for it?” Tommy didn’t bargain, willing to pay the price that Punz was going to slap onto the thin ring.

“For this? A job.” Punz said, leaning onto the counter, “I have something I need. From Las Navadas. And rumor has it, Jester has a soft spot for you. He might let you live after you snatch something from his island.”

Tommy’s hands itched as he clenched them. And with a sigh, he nodded. “Deal.” Fuck. Stealing from Las Nevadas was always such a bad idea.

“Wonderful!” Punz shut the box with the ring in it and hid it behind the counter. “I’ll send you the details. Is there anything else you want?”

Tommy’s phone went off once more. Punz’s eyes flicked at it. “Is that important, Red? I’d hate for you to miss something.” A dangerous note in his voice, as if daring Tommy to make a mistake.

Punz was never Tommy’s friend. Partners, yes. Purpled’s friend, absolutely. But allies?

Punz would sell Tommy to the wolves if it meant he could have a quick buck.

He dug his hand into his pocket and pulled out the phone. Glancing at the caller id ‘*Big T-Man*’. Tommy declined it and held the power button. Watching as the screen turned black.

Tubbo had been blowing his phone up for days now. Tommy wasn’t ready for the conversation that would happen.

“It’s nothing. Just an old client desperate to get me to steal some shitty item.” Tommy shrugged, face blank.

“If you’re looking for some new jobs, a whole country just opened up. I hear from the rumor mill that the Empire is asking around for some certain items.” Punz’ eyes got sharp, staring Tommy down with a knowing glint, “and certain *people*. I heard you got into the kidnapping business?”

Tommy’s stomach lurched. The walls felt like they were closing in, and a cold sweat broke out underneath the bindings. He was painfully aware of his expression. Keeping it cool. Trying to act *normal*. He arched an eyebrow. “Oh? Who are they looking for?”

“Some kid,” Punz shrugged, but he stared Tommy down. Like he *knew*. Did he? How much did Purpled tell him? “Get this, a songbird. Know anybody like that?”

“One of those?” Tommy’s other eyebrow raised. “I don’t deal with human trafficking. They’ll have better luck with Jester. Or if they’re desperate, Manifold.”

“That’s what I was thinking too.” Punz agreed, “they are desperate. Trying to dig up anything about this kid. Know of any rumors? I might cut you a deal.”

Was Punz teasing him or was he being honest? Tommy couldn’t tell.

“Nah,” Tommy shrugged, acutely aware of his wings bound underneath the extra large jacket. He was feet away from the most cut throat information broker. There were no secrets when it came to Punz. You just tried to pay a higher price than whoever was trying to get the information. “Hey, there is one more thing I wanted to ask. Got a bag of holding working yet? I know you were looking into them last time I was around.”

Punz grinned, and straightened up. “I’m close. I have a beta type.” Punz said, “it’s not like the Warden’s work, but it’ll let you keep a stash of items.”

“What’s the issue with it?” Tommy rubbed his hands together. He had wanted a bag of holding for *ages* now. The more room he could put his stolen items in, the cooler things he could nab. He could like, steal a fucking *statue*.

“Sometimes it’ll launch items out of it at mach one speed if you hold it open long enough.” Punz pointed to his ceiling where there were... a few new holes. “I’ve had to patch up the ceiling more times than I can count. From the fruit I’ve thrown in there.”

“I do not care.” Tommy said with a hint of glee, “give me that bad boy. How much?”

“Two. I’ll add it to your tab. Just let me know how it functions out in the field.” Punz handed the bag over. It was a simple brown satchel, and Tommy ran his fingers down the side of it.

“Does it have a size limit?” Tommy asked, unable to tear his eyes away from his new baby.

“Not that I know of.” Punz shrugged, “do you have something in mind?”

Tommy looked up with a sly grin, “I’ve always wanted to steal a train.”

The window didn't want to open. The hinges protested, even after the lock had been carefully picked apart. And black gloved hands flexed in the small gap, getting a better grip before prying the window pane up.

There was a squeak, echoing around the large and spacious room. And the hands froze. Counting the seconds as they passed. After a minute, and nothing inside was disturbed, the hands continued to pry it open. It squeaked and groaned as pressure was applied.

"Stupid, shitty-" Tommy muttered his breath, the warmth of his mask that covered his face making this breath sticky and hot. It had been literal months since he had worn his suit. And he had forgotten how annoying it was sometimes.

The window creaked, and for a second it looked like it might shatter. And Tommy grunted in irritation. He had a can of lubricant for things like this. But when he tried to pull it out he discovered that it had gone bad in his absence. The nozzle was clogged up, leaving the whole thing useless.

He almost tossed it over his shoulder but he really shouldn't leave clues for heroes to pick up. He put it back into its pouch with a curse, and had to do this the old fashion way.

He felt like he was a basic thief again. He was making mistakes, left and right. And Tommy's mood only got worse. Breaking the damn window would be quieter than this embarrassing shit. Tommy was going to go through all his pockets as soon as he got home and replace *everything*.

Finally there was enough space for Tommy to squeeze in. And he had never been more grateful for the new pendant, the lack of wings on his back made it easier to maneuver through tight spaces.

As soon as he hit the grate beneath his feet, Tommy ducked into a shadow. Waiting for his eyes to adjust to the darkness before surveying the warehouse sprawling in front of him. Shipping containers made up of metal and wood were stacked on each other, large iron shelves holding items covered in plastic sheets. A layer of musty dust covered some objects, while some looked like they were just wheeled in that morning.

Tommy didn't waste any more time. He found the nearest set of stairs, his enchanted boots not making a noise as he stepped down until he hit the concrete. He crouched, pausing as he blinked and Saw-

-dark shadows-

-a door opening, the hinges smooth and gliding silently-

-papers spilling out of boxes-

Tommy grinned, finally, things were going right.

He took in a deep breath, steadying himself even as adrenaline surged through his veins. Tilting his head to the side, stretching out his neck, as he began to slink through the shadows.

The building was empty. Yet, the numerous cameras that dotted the area still blinked from where they were hung on the walls.

Tommy might be rusty, but he still had his *standards*. And getting caught by easily avoidable cameras would be annoying. His ego couldn't take another hit, as fragile as it was now.

This was a simple break in. In and out. Nobody the wiser. He just wanted a piece of information.

The warehouse wasn't made to stop thieves such as Tommy. And he duck and wove through the various lined halls, boxes and other cargo being ignored for the goal. He would personally love to take a crowbar and pry open each box.

It'll be like a little mystery. What could he find in them? A crate full of chocolate bars? Or perhaps it would be something cooler, like a bunch of bike parts? Who knows, it's a surprise! But alas, Tommy had other things to do.

There was a little office in the back corner. And Tommy stalked towards it, his boots hitting the ground without a single sound. He ducked around a camera's sightline and walked up to the door. His gloved hand jiggled the doorknob, and it opened with ease under his fingers.

Ha, the door wasn't even *locked*.

The room was musty and smelled of paper. It wasn't surprising. Due to the amount of it that was stacked in piles around. Tommy closed the door behind him, the blinds waving back and forth from the motion.

Tommy did not have night vision, sadly. Flicking on the lightswitch, orange light blinked on above him. Humming loudly.

"If I were a paper tracking certain shipments, where would I be," Tommy muttered to himself. And then stopped himself, as he realized that *all* of the papers were that. Tracking shipments and cataloging where things were in the warehouse.

Damn. Things weren't going well today. With a grimace, he picked up the first paper.

God, even the *handwriting* is awful.

It took him less than an hour to find it. Pouring over the information until Tommy stumbled across the clipboard. It had been buried under a half dozen piles of paper. It would've taken too much energy to try and see where the damned thing was. If it had taken any longer, he might have had to come back the next night. The ledger was still a mess. But it actually gave him *something*.

Perfect.

The shipment matched the number that Punz texted Tommy. Tommy needed that fucking ring. This job might be difficult but Tommy can pull it off. He is that good.

The item came in three days ago. And it left the warehouse yesterday. Tommy knew that he was late to steal it. The ledger's shaky handwriting said it was sent to Las Nevadas. Loaded up at a cargo plane that would fly to the floating island as it traveled around the world.

The item description just said: *fragile misc. item*

That was what Tommy wanted to *know*. Punz just said 'you'll know it when you see it' which is *not* helpful.

Tommy groaned, but the job was done for the night. He wedged the ledger underneath the papers. Despite rifling through the pages, the office looked the same as it did when he came in. Time to disappear.

He flicked the light off and left the office in the same manner he went into it. Hidden. Stealthy.

A footstep echoed in the darkness.

It was not Tommy's.

He froze, still caught in the motion of ducking. His ears almost ringing as he strained them. A trick he knew was to open his mouth slightly and breathe through it, it let him hear better.

Was this a trap? Did Punz see through Tommy and he sold him out?

A scuff. Another couple steps. Tommy tilted his head slightly. And a low mutter appeared.

"-this sucks. There is nothing here." A voice says, and Tommy sees a shadow moving across the floor. The clouds had moved, revealing a moon in the sky. Giving the dark warehouse a spotlight.

Number six, although the fan favorite and voted as the most beloved hero, 404 stepped into the light. A scowl on his handsome face as he scanned the darkness. Completely missing the villain hiding the shadows.

Tommy's blank face broke into a wide, shark like grin.

"-oday is that a freight train carrying cargo has suddenly disappeared from the tracks. No word from investigators about what the train had been carrying. Nobody was hurt or involved with such a strange theft. There is more information we'll share, stay tuned after the break." Tommy watched as the news channel suddenly switched to an advertisement before reaching over and flicking the tv off with the remote. With a groan, he flipped over on the pile of blankets and pillows that made up his nest, and dug around for his phone. He lost the fucking thing in his nest constantly. And he shuffled around lazily until his fingers bumped into it underneath a pillow.

The screen was only *slightly* cracked. But it worked perfectly fine. Tommy might have tons of money to easily spend it on things, but he was always going to be a penny pincher. If it works, he'll keep using it until it dies.

He flipped through the screen with all of the apps on it. Dismissing the unread texts and missed calls from Tubbo, not even glancing at them. He wasn't ready to deal with it yet. He switched to a video app, to a book, to a game, back to a video, then moving to a new game-

Nothing was catching his interest. Flicking through the apps until he looped to the beginning. Over and over again. A deep pit inside of him grew larger and aching as Tommy was alone with his own thoughts. He needed something to distract himself.

He opened up youtube, and found nothing but shitty recommendations. He fucked with his algorithm too much to find anything useful. He even went to the trending page but found nothing but garbage fake family vlog videos.

He closed the app and moved onto social media. But he had been scrolling through the pages endlessly before, and nothing had updated since. The world was moving too slow. And Tommy wasn't finding anything to keep himself entertained.

He moved back to the list of apps, scrolling through the loop countless times before his eye caught on one. It had been one of the pre-downloaded apps on the phone that he never deleted. Tommy had thought it might be useful one day. He clicked on the bright green owl, and duolingo started up.

It asked for a login, and Tommy threw in an email and a shitty password until it presented him with a page of languages to learn. Tommy knew the basics of many of them. He could successfully ask 'where can I find the bathroom' in fifteen different languages. It was an incredibly useful tool to use broken speech around others- they tend to drop their guards around him. A tourist disguise was easy to make up on the fly.

Tommy perused through the app, pausing once or twice, before making his way down the list. And finally one word caught his eye. And that pit in his heart grew three times in an instant. Piglin. Duolingo taught Piglin.

Fuck. *Fuck.*

Tommy didn't have a choice now. He clicked on the tab and it brought him to a page where it asked him how well he knew the language. Shit, Tommy didn't fucking care. He hit intermediary and it asked even more questions but Tommy didn't give a fuck. He flicked through the screens until he found one where it gave him an option to listen to the words.

Tommy buried his hands in the pillows, searching frantically until he found the pair of bulky over the head earphones he owned and hooked them up with his phone. He leaned up against the nest, and hit play.

Oh.

Oh.

The familiar grunts and growls of the language filled Tommy's ears. And it fuckin-

It was like Techno was here again. If Tommy closed his eyes he could just imagine Techno was here. Laying in the nest next to him. Or maybe he was back in that shitty cabin again, listening to Techno while he braided Tommy's hair.

For a few minutes, Tommy felt... better. Like a missing limb was stitched back onto him. The threads were thin and frail, like spiderwebs, but it was enough. The recording ended, and Tommy instantly hit the 'replay' button again before closing his eyes.

Grunt grunt grunt snort.

Tommy shivered slightly, and he pulled a thick blanket around him. Bundling up until he could pretend that the weight was from Techno sitting next to him. All too soon the recording stopped, and Tommy suddenly couldn't stop himself from a sudden waterfall of distressed chirps that fell from his lips.

Fuck.

Fuck.

Tommy missed his flock so much. It ached inside of him like a poisoned rotting wound. Festering and spreading. The noises helped. It spread a balm on the split flesh. Cooling it and comforting him. His eyes were fucking tearing up. Damn it, Tommy needed Techno here with such a visceral want.

He wanted Techno to be in his nest. Tommy needed him here. He wanted his pink hair splayed out onto the pillows and blankets. To have gems gently braided into the locks. He wanted to hear Techno laugh again, and he wanted-

Tommy wanted his flock.

His *family*.

Tommy wiped the tears away viciously from his face, and pulled the phone closer so he could click on a different recording. He sorted through the lessons until he found the longest one available, over a half an hour of Piglin speech. And he downloaded it and pressed play, curling up under the blanket and closing his eyes.

This would be enough. It would have to be. For now, Tommy is going to just... listen. And everything would be okay.

Two days afterwards, newspapers broke the news. ***BELOVED HERO, GONE? IDOL AND HEROIC WONDER 404 HAS OFFICIALLY BEEN REPORTED MISSING!***

Interlude (final part)

Chapter Summary

the end of the interlude chapters

Chapter Notes

camera slowly pans to the authors exhausted face, a kazoo playing "The Final Countdown" by Europe out of tune.

There are... so many shenanigans. In this chapter. It feels like I wrote 10k of a crack fic. I can't think of any warnings except this is My Superhero Fic and I Get To Make The Rules and This Superhero World Can Be Cracky.

hap birth awof.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy stared down at George. George, who sat in a rickety old chair and was tied up with ropes, stared back. Tommy was leisurely laying on a rafter, his feet dangling in the air. The empty building was one of dozens in the slums. It was in slightly worse condition than the ones surrounding it. The windows were empty of glass, no doubt broken years ago. Leaving them open and free to throw out a hero or two. Tommy appreciated the aesthetic.

But the silence between the yoinked hero and the villain who definitely didn't plan that far ahead was grating.

It was fucking awkward.

"So." Tommy said, fidgeting. "Your response times have gone down I see." Like Tommy had left the trackers on George's suit. Those were the first things he got rid of. He tossed them into various dumpsters in the city just to make the heroes dive for them.

He did get a few shots of Sapnap awkwardly standing in a dumpster so he figured it was a win.

"Oh shut up." George rolled his eyes under his goggles. He didn't find this whole thing impressive. Like this whole thing was one of a hundred other kidnappings. The guy did get thrown into white vans a lot. Tommy pursed his lips from beneath his mask. He was doing his best. For his second ever kidnapping. The first one didn't count.

“Your bantering skills have also gone down. Damn it, did you guys get sloppy when I left? Is that it?” Tommy stretched out and bemoaned dramatically. “You can’t do anything without me, Gogy. You’re just a pretty face.”

“Shut up!” Gogy spluttered, flushing red under his goggles. His ears started to turn red at the tips.

“Why are you booing me?” Tommy teased with a sharp grin, “I’m *right*. Mister Simp powers.”

“Fuck off, it isn’t like that.” George was actually getting worked up, and Tommy let one of his legs fall from the ledge he was sitting on, idly swinging it back and forth. It was so much fun to mess with ‘stick-up-his-ass’ 404.

Sapnap usually exploded into fire. Dream spluttered a bit. And Gogy, oh, sweet George, just fucking blushed like a newborn baby.

Let it be known that Tommy was having a *very* good time right now. Despite the hastily thrown together plan and the mountain of prepping he did. He set up the battle ground. And now it was time to reap the rewards.

All Tommy wanted to do right now was be a fucking pain in the ass and by Prime above he was going to do it.

“Bruh,” Tommy laughed, “all you have to do is take your shitty goggles off and everybody goes ‘of course I’ll stop robbing this bank, mister 404. Can I give you my gun, 404? Can you sign my shirt sir 404? Can I get some feet pics, pretty please 404?’”

“Why don’t you take them off and get a closer look?” Gogy tried, and Tommy tilted his head back and cackled.

“No! I think you’re a pretty ugly bitch.” Tommy laughed, “I don’t want to go blind.”

“That hurt,” George pouted, and he kicked his legs out. “I don’t suppose you want to confess to me what evil plans you have?”

“Me? Monologue? I thought you’d never ask!” Tommy grinned, and he kicked off the rafter. Falling down and rolling across the floor with ease. “Gogy, dearest sweetest, Gogy,” he stalked closer to the hero with measured steps. “Boy, do I have a fun plan for you!”

George rolled his eyes, “I know your M.O. Red, you don’t like hurting heroes.”

“You guys get mad if villains do that.” Tommy rolled his eyes, “I don’t want fucking Foxtrot after me. He already has such a huge grudge. And I swear I’ve never messed with him before, I have no idea why he hates me. I am a mischievous nuisance. Nothing more.”

“What about the time you burned Rose’s garden?”

“Okay, so that wasn’t my fault. I was just a bystander.”

“You aggravated Sapnap into following you into her private estate.”

“I wasn’t the one who shot fireballs at her prized tomatoes. That was all on him.” Tommy folded his arms, shaking his head. “I, like any sane person, was *avoiding* getting hit by said fireballs. What did you want me to do? Let him shoot me?”

“Surrender. Give yourself up.” George leaned forwards, deadly serious. “Do your time. And leave crime behind you.”

Tommy pretended to think about it. He tapped a gloved hand over his chin. “Hmm. You know... I don’t recall committing any crimes.”

“You broke into a museum and stole-”

“I just walked in there. The doors weren’t even locked. I wanted to see the exhibits. And that painting looked *so* lonely. I freed it from captivity.”

“What about the crown jewels?”

“I needed them. For a thing.” Tommy’s nest needed new jewels. They looked *amazing* next to his poster of Manhunt. “A very important thing that heroes wouldn’t understand.”

George scoffed, “Right. You replaced the Mona Lisa with a fake.”

“I did not.” Tommy shot back, “you have no proof on that one.”

“So you admit that you did it.”

“I have an alibi.” Tommy leaned over and poked at George’s chest. “I had a date with the hottest woman ever.”

Gogy’s face grimaced in disbelief. “I seriously doubt that.”

“I’ll have you know!” Tommy poked at George again. “I have many wives! So many! Hundreds! Women are pog. Queens, one might say.”

“That’s also against the law. You can only have one spouse.”

“Shut.” Tommy grabbed George’s chin, and lifted it, “up.”

“Oooh, is that what gets your goat?”

“What are you, forty?” Tommy shot back, “nobody uses the phrase ‘gets your goat’ old man. What do you do? Botox? Somehow I’m not surprised.”

Gogy spluttered, “I do not-”

“I think,” Tommy said, letting the amusement in his voice fall away. “You should be more concerned about what I am going to do to you instead of my love life, 404.” A shadow falling over his mask as he leaned down to the hero in his captivity.

“What are you going to do?” George swallowed, his eyes still visible behind the goggles flicking over Tommy’s mask. Trying to find a hint. But he didn’t find any.

“Have you read the newspapers recently?” Tommy had one in his back pocket, and he pulled out the folded paper. He didn’t even glance at it as he read out the black and bold title, “beloved hero gone? *Idol and heroic wonder*,” Tommy’s voice dripped with sarcasm, “404 has officially gone missing.”

“I don’t know about you, but it’s pretty hard to get the news when you’re tied up.” George tried to joke, but the humor fell flat. Tommy slowly looked over at the article. His gloved hands tapped at a paragraph.

“Voted number one as ‘Hottest Hero of the Year’ 404 has gone missing and the Guild of Heroes have officially announced that he went missing after he failed to report back after a seemingly simple break in.” Tommy pulled the newspaper back, and then looked at George. “Do you know what the worst thing about this is?”

“That... they said that you did a simple break in?” George stiffly shrugged, tense for what Tommy was going to say next.

“No!” Tommy groaned, his shoulders falling, “they completely overlooked using ‘404: not found’ as the fucking title! What are journalists doing these days? No wonder newspapers are going out of business. They overlook the best fucking line of their career.”

George let out a silent sigh, sinking into his bindings. The tension falling from his shoulders. Tommy slapped at the newspaper with the back of his hand. “Idiots!”

“Yeah I would have to admit that is better.” George agreed, and Tommy shook his head.

“Besides that, I also have *so* many questions on how you got the ‘Hottest Hero of the Year’ award. Do you like, apply for that shit?”

The hero perked up. “Actually, somebody else has to submit your name into the pool and then- *why the fuck am I telling you this ?*” George muttered to himself. Tommy still heard it.

“Well, I have to admit. I jumped the gun, Gogy.” Tommy sat down on the chair next to the hero, kicking his legs out. “I was going to plan out a big and fabulous heist that would lure the three of you in, I was planning on fireworks! A bouncy castle! A fucking llama.”

“Why would you have a llama-”

“Shut up, I’m monologuing.” Tommy slapped a hand over George’s mouth. “A man can dream, George. I’m not saying that the llama is important. But I had serious plans for it. Got it?”

George nodded, and Tommy released the hold on his face. “I grabbed you on a whim, so we’re getting the bootleg version of it. And I figured, what better way to mess with the hottest hero of the year,” Tommy reached into his pouch and pulled out a cardboard box, “than to go platinum blonde?”

The box of shitty gas-station hair dye sat in Tommy's hand.

"No." Gogy whispered in a hushed voice. "Red, listen, we can talk about this."

"Don't worry your little sweet head about it." Tommy leaned over and patted Gogy on the head patronizingly. "I made sure and checked the reviews on this bad boy. It has one star! Apparently, this box of dye is known for not only making your hair carrot orange, but it also damages your hair so badly it can't be dyed again for at least two weeks! Isn't that exciting, *hero*?"

It was at this moment that Gogy tried to squirm out of the ropes. Throwing his weight against the chair and straining to get out. He grunted and wheezed, but Gogy was known for his pretty face, and not super strength.

Tommy watched with a wicked smile and began to softly chuckle. "I missed this," he sighed wistfully, "prime, have I missed this." He pulled open the top of the cardboard box.

"Get the fuck away from me you *monster*." George hissed, bucking side to side, but the chair was nailed down to the ground.

"Good luck trying to get out of the ropes, bitch." Tommy said, distracted as he pulled out the bottle of dye, pulling out the instructions to peer at the badly translated text. "I figured out how to tie those from a super villain. It took me a hot minute to get out of those, and I had time to look at them. You, however, do not."

There was a sound of a struggle, before it stopped. "Please," George pleaded, "Red. Don't do this. I love my hair."

"You can grow it back." Tommy hummed, "did you know this is from China? The instructions are pretty hard to read."

"I have a fucking award ceremony next week," George hissed, "please. It's for *charity*. Think of the kids, Red. The *children*."

Tommy laughed, "I think you should invest in a good hat, Gogy." And he tossed the instructions over his shoulders. A shark-like smile tugging on his lips. "I think I got it. Kind of. It said to leave it in for more than twenty minutes, but I think since your hair is so dark we can keep it in for twice the time."

"*Dream!*" Gogy let out a scream, his voice echoing around the dark space around them. "*Help!*"

"Oh, George." Tommy sighed happily, "nobody is going to help you. Not for a long time."

The television screen comes alive, the video feed black and white. It is angled up high, looking out the window.

At first there was nothing. A serene scene that hadn't moved in hours. Then there was a slight flicker of motion. A shadow barely crossing into the light.

The glass slides open. And two dark figures come through.

A boot scrapes the ground. A soft noise, that was easily swallowed up by the silence. The two figures made hand gestures to each other. Signaling their commands. One, the taller of the two, pointed towards a shadowy doorway. Holding up his fingers, as the second one nodded in agreement.

The two crept closer. Hunching over and keeping low, to avoid any suspicion.

The cameras in the hallway still caught them. The lens glinted in the low light.

They touched the door knob. It was locked. One pulled out a pair of lock picks. They glinted in the moonlight as they began to pick the lock. It took some effort. Jiggling the metal pick around, hoping to catch the pins.

Above the two figures, an intercom crackled to life like a gunshot. "I feel like that is illegal." The voice mused, playfully teasing. "Sapnap, you dog. I thought you were a pillar of purity. And what's this? Breaking *and* entering? I am simply astonished. You depraved criminal."

The lights flicked on. The electricity buzzing loudly from the old lights above the two intruders' heads.

Dream straightened up. Staring up at a camera with his mask. The crooked smiley face staring daggers into the lens. It was entertaining to see how many emotions one mask could make.

"Red," Dream was tense, barking out the name with fury. "*Let him go.*"

There was a pause, and the intercom clicked on. There was a shuffle of fabric, or perhaps it was just static, before the voice spoke up again. "You're a bit too late to make demands, Dream." There was a laugh.

And then it clicked off.

Dream waved Sapnap away from the door. And Sapnap fell back as Dream landed a powerful kick against the door. Snapping the lock, and causing the wood to splinter.

They were not in stealth mode anymore. And they threw themselves into the empty building.

What had once been an abandoned office building turned into a temporary hospital, which was then abandoned over time. It left large empty floors with nothing but the walls and the dirty staircases.

Two days prior, it had been a home for several homeless folks until they suddenly offered a sum of money to leave and not to come back. Some of the men and women left items behind. Garbage, mostly. A few barrels that had been used as fire places, for when the nights became cold.

Two days was enough time to change the layout of the building. And the lights were bright, meant to sting and hurt anybody who entered suddenly.

Sapnap held a hand up to his eyes, blinking rapidly to adjust to the sudden change. But Dream didn't make a sign if it hurt. He strode into the room, his mask moving around slowly as he took in the surroundings.

There were tents set up. Dozens of them. Creating straight paths. White and red striped canopies that could be found lining the streets during festivals. There were a few items in the tents, like a random table or a chair. A random sleeping bag shoved in the corner. But they were empty.

There were a dozen hiding places for an enemy to pop out of. And Dream, despite charging in, used precaution. Making hand signals to Sapnap, and the two of them slowly crept into the maze of tents.

Dream's hand dipped into his hoodie pocket. Pulling out a purple sword with a flicker of blue square-shaped sparks, and hefting it in his hand. He kept it ready as they passed the empty tents. The dark shadows hide nothing. But every step was a threat.

Then Dream caught sight of a shadow. A figure was within the next tent. And he didn't hesitate. Sliding forwards, and throwing his sword with a powerful flick of his wrist.

The cardboard cut out of 404 broke in half. His grinning face was cut in the middle. The axe hitting the ground as the sharp blade sliced through like a hot knife through butter. Leaving a headless 404 teetering back and forth, the thumbs up still held high. A sign still held in George's cardboard hands, *'Don't do drugs kids!'*

"Harsh much?" The voice was close. Nearby. Sapnap was on his feet, throwing himself in the direction of the voice. His hands lit up in flame, burning through the fabric of the tents. His head snapping side to side before landing on a yellow and blue box with a little antenna sticking out the side. A toy radio.

"Damn, I knew you'd probably do something. But you cut off 404's head! Man." Red chuckled from the plastic speaker. "You guys are heartless. Killing your own bestie. What if that had been the real one?"

Sapnap snarled, picking up the toy and watching as the plastic bubbled up in his hand. The voice crackled and disappeared as the radio was destroyed.

"That cost me forty bucks." Another voice whined from behind cloth. "Those are fuckin' expensive. Back in my day, toys cost twenty cents or something. Well, actually. I didn't get a lot of toys. Or any, now that I think about it."

The tent wall was sliced as Dream stepped through, enchanted axe in hand.

"Don't worry Red," Dream said with a steel voice, "I'll make sure to bring you a doll when you're in prison."

“Awww,” Red cooed from yet another direction. Sapnap and Dream turned in unison to the sound. “You are just so sweet. I missed you Dream. It’s been so long since I’ve seen your ugly face.”

“I wish I could say the same.” Dream said calmly, “but I don’t like to lie.”

Sapnap snorted, and Dream tilted his head to shoot his friend a glare.

“Oh?” Red picked up on the interaction. “Did you miss me? Come on, I won’t tell anybody. It’ll be a little secret. Just you and me and Sapnap, but he doesn’t really count these days.”

“Hey!” Sapnap cried out, offended.

“Sorry, Sappy. You know, you’re kind of not really important. But I appreciate you coming out anyways.” Red’s voice came from behind them. And they whirled around. Dream tapped Sapnap’s arm and made a hand motion. Sapnap nodded, and he lit the tent in front of him on fire.

“Oh come on. A lot of these tents are rentals. You’re going to make me lose my deposit.” Red whined at them from the left now. And Sapnap pulled his hands back. The fire rising up and whipping around them. Latching onto the cotton and feeding on it. Burning away any cover that the villain might be cowering behind.

With Sapnap’s control, the fabric was gone within twenty seconds. Eating away and then moving onto the next tent and then to the next one.

Another toy radio bubbled and cracked on the ground from the heat. The blue and yellow plastic melting. Dream stepped up to it, picking it up.

“You..... shouldn’t..... have...” and then the radio died.

“Sapnap-?”

“Oh fuck, get *down*.”

Sapnap tackled Dream just as the world around them cracked and *boomed*.

Confetti drifted down around them like snowflakes. Sapnap and Dream were braced for a bigger, more deadly explosion. But Tommy watched with idle fascination as the two figures on the ground slowly uncurled from a flickering screen.

“You’re a sick fuck.” George spat from behind Tommy. He hummed, and turned to stare at George. A smile under his mask.

The shock of bright orange yellow hair was spiked and Tommy wondered if he should bring out the next box of dyes. He was sure he could try and do a polka dot pattern. That would really bring out the brown in George’s eyes.

“Yeah I know.” Tommy shrugged, before picking up the next radio in the line of them he had.

“Did you guys have a blast or what?” He laughed into the radio, watching on the box television as Dream and Sapnap stood on their feet. “I think I did. You might want to be careful burning the rest of my little area. Who knows what kind of explosives I have hidden in them. The next one might not be so... friendly.”

“Dream-” George shouted, and Tommy’s finger quickly released the call button. Ending the radio transmission. From the speakers Tommy set up, he heard Dream shouting George’s name.

“That was naughty.” Tommy tilted his head to eye George. “I was going to let you be, but that... tsk tsk. Tricky move, Gogy.”

“You won’t hurt me.” George puffed up his chest bravely. Tommy shook his head.

“I can do so, so much worse.” He leaned down and dug around in the satchel Punz gave him. He grabbed a few items blindly. No, he did not need a crowbar. Or the grappling gun. He shuffled around, pulling the bag up further his arm as he dug deeper. The bag of holding was *delightful*.

Even though sometimes it shot things out at an alarming speed. The sandwich he put in there unfortunately decided to yeet itself randomly onto a building. Leaving Tommy mourning for the snack.

Tommy pulled out a pair of dirty socks and waved them in the air. He wrinkled his nose at the smell. He threw pretty much everything in his bag now. Even his laundry.

George deflated slightly as he took in the sight of them.

“You’re right, Gogy.” Tommy leaned in, balling up one sock into his fist, “I’m not going to hurt you.”

The hero couldn’t really put up a fight. He struggled, but Tommy was in control here. And he shoved the sock into George’s mouth. He stepped back, looking proudly at his handiwork.

George started gagging immediately. His face flushing red from disgust.

“That looks great on you.” Tommy patted him on the shoulder happily. “Now... What was your team doing while I was distracted?” And he turned back to the television. He switched between cameras until he found one with Dream and Sapnap in it.

Tommy sucked in an excited breath. “Oh this is a good part.” He grinned and patted George on the head. “You stay here. I need to get ready.”

Dream and Sapnap were quietly whispering to themselves as they walked through the rows of unburned tents. Red hadn’t lied. Soon after they had begun to explore, Sapnap found a package of C4 surrounded by nails. It would be deadly if he lit it on fire. So that left him

powerless. Who knows what other kind of traps they would spring. Dream disabled the ones they found, and placed the rest in his inventory, but there could always be more.

“Red’s been quiet for a bit.” Sapnap whispered, keeping himself as quiet as possible. “Maybe George got out and took him down.”

“We don’t know that.” Dream replied, just as quietly. “He could be watching for the perfect time to swoop in.”

“Remember when you were moaning how you missed the easy villains?” Sapnap whispered, “instead of politics-?”

“Shut up.”

“I’m just sayin’-”

“No really, shut up.”

Dream’s mask tilted to the side. And Sapnap fell quiet. Both of their ears straining to hear it and-

There was a slight mechanical *tick tick tick* off to their left. “Bomb!” Dream barked, and he grabbed Sapnap’s arm and pulled him away with lightning quick reflexes. The two stumbled at first, but then they regained their feet as they ran away from the trap. They made it two hundred yards before they heard a loud *pop* and colorful smoke exploded. Filling the air with reds, greens, blues, and yellows. A small round ball, emanating the thickly dense smoke rolled and bounced until it hit Dream’s boot, spewing out an acid pink color.

A couple of small pops later, with a handful of flashing lights, the smoke bombs were hissing slightly as they expelled their contents into the air. Filling the abandoned office space with acrid fumes.

“What the fuck-” Sapnap muttered, taking a single step back.

Onto a steel tripwire.

The latch at the end caught and snapped, just as Sapnap’s breath hitched in shock. Dream reached out and yanked Sapnap back by his shirt. There was the sound of wire pulling freely, and there was a snap and a dark human shape snapped up from behind a tent flap.

Dream’s hand snapped out of his hoodie pocket with a crossbow forming from blue squares in his hand. The bolt was flying even before the figure stopped moving. It impaled the figure, just as the two registered what it was.

A cardboard cutout of George, hands up in a heroic pose. A sign in his hands in dark red bold words. ‘*Stay in school kids!*’ Now, a crossbow bolt had pierced the flimsy material in the middle of George’s chest. It wobbled back and forth precariously.

“Wow, you did it twice. Normally I don’t repeat my tricks,” Red’s voice crackled from yet another radio in the distance. The smoke was now intermixing the colors. Making the world

around them chokingly small. Sapnap and Dream were on their feet, back to back, as they scanned around themselves. But it was useless. The smoke had done its job perfectly.

“Maybe I should keep Gogy, you know? Since you literally keep killing him. First a sword, now an arrow? I feel like you want him dead. I should save him from *you*.”

“Leave him alone!” Dream snarled, his hands smoothly pulling a new bolt into the crossbow.

“I have... *mostly*.” Red cackled, the haunting noise becoming more distorted as time went on. “Don’t worry, Dream. Honestly, I’d be more worried about you...” the voice trailed off.

Sapnap let out a sharp growl, “when I get my hands on that thieving brat-” he stepped forward, his hands lighting on fire.

“Can it. We need to be calm here.” Dream stopped him, “we are in his playground now. If we aren’t careful he’ll win. We have to do this carefully-”

There was a loud click. Speakers hummed as they came to life, all around them. They let out a high pitch squeal before stopping.

“OH THIS IS SO MUCH LOUDER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE,” Red’s voice echoed and made the ground beneath their feet vibrate with the noise. Dream and Sapnap clamped their hands over their ears from the sheer volume of it. “HEY YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO THIS FUNNY COMPILATION I’VE MADE. YOUR FRIEND MADE SOME FUNNY NOISES YOU SHOULD HEAR.”

There were a couple more clicks. And then, “*DREAM!*” George’s voice screeched through the speakers, “*HELP! HELP HE’S GOING TO- DREAM!!! AHHHH!*”

Dream broke into a blind run. Sapnap on his heels. “Dream, wait-!” But Sapnap’s words were drowned out by George’s screams.

The room was engulfed in smoke and shadows. And Dream’s boot hit against the ground. Sapnap was only a few feet behind, unable to grab his teammate. Just out of reach. It was too late. Dream’s leg caught on a trip wire. And from beyond their sight, something darted out and hit him in the thigh. Right between the plated armor that his jeans hid.

Dream hit the ground. Just as the speakers suddenly cut off.

Sapnap was on him in a second. Pulling Dream up and away from the exposed area. Dream jerked and twitched, breathing heavily as Sapnap pulled them behind a flimsy tent. Sapnap was patting Dream down, and his hand hit something small and pointy.

“Shit,” Sapnap hissed, and pulled the dart out of Dream’s leg. “He got you good. Are you feeling alright?”

“I’m-” Dream gasped, and gulped in air, “I’m fine. Dizzy. But I’m okay.”

“You need to sit this out,” Sapnap tried, but Dream waved him off.

“We *can't*.” Dream gritted between his teeth. “Whatever it is, it isn’t strong enough to take me out fully.”

“You’re compromised-”

“George is *here*, Sap.” Dream snapped back, “he needs us. You heard him.”

“Yeah, I heard it. And I’m still hearing it. But you’re fucking drugged by something we don’t know. It could be poison. It could be anything.”

“Red doesn’t kill, you know that-” Dream groaned, and Sapnap hissed back.

“Red doesn’t fucking kidnap people but here we are. We don’t know why he is doing this. He’s gone insane.”

“Well that’s just rude.” The voice of Red lacked the crackle of a radio. It was close. And in *person*. The two heroes stiffened. And Sapnap let Dream get to his wavering feet. “You guys know me. I haven’t changed... much. Maybe I just missed you guys so much I wanted to do something special. A little treat.” Red’s voice was echoing in the room. Bouncing around the area. Unable to pinpoint exactly where he was.

“Red,” Dream hissed, but his breathing was uneven. “If you really wanted to treat us, you could’ve shown up to the police station with your hands already cuffed.”

Red’s voice came from the opposite direction this time. “Aww, Dream you hurt me. I missed you so much. And this is how you repay my efforts?”

“You kidnapped George! Not to mention the many crimes you’ve committed.” Sapnap hissed, his palms bursting into wild flames that popped and snapped. “You deserve to rot in prison.”

“You guys are just so much fun to poke.” Red mused, just out of sight. His voice now came from the left. “Three best friends, rising up the ranks to become the best team of heroes there ever was. You always stick to each other. Through thick and thin. What better way to get your full, undivided attention than to just snatch one of you up?”

“You have our attention,” Dream’s voice was full and commanding. Even as he swayed on his feet, “now let him go.”

“Hmmm,” the smoke was clearing. Becoming a thick haze instead of an impenetrable wall. Through the fog, they finally caught sight of the villain. Dressed in his recognizable suit, Red stood fifty feet away. A hand on his hip, the other tapping a finger against his chin. As if thinking.

“You know what, I don’t think I *do* have your full attention, you know?” Red snapped his gloved fingers, tilting his head at the two heroes. With a swing of his arm, he opened a simple brown bag that hung next to his hip. And from within it, he pulled out a giant fucking *gun*. He aimed it at Sapnap and Dream.

“Merry Christmas,” Red said, even as the two heroes began to move, “you filthy animals.” And he pulled the trigger on the rocket launcher with a hysterical cackle.

“*Dream!*” Sapnap shrieked as the first rocket, sparks flaring red hot, shot at them. He tackled Dream, the two falling over in their haste to get cover. The tents behind them burst into flame, as a second one was shot at them.

“Fuck!” Dream cursed, wheezing. His leg was dragging on the ground. He could still use it, but it felt numb. “Okay, you go left. I go right. He can’t aim at the two of us at the same time. Got it?” Sapnap nodded, a serious glint in his eyes.

“Be safe.”

Another rocket buzzed past the two. And it burst with an explosion of heat and sparks.

Dream let out a bitter laugh, “I’ve been through so much worse. This is a walk in the park, Sap.”

The two split.

Sapnap went to the left, Dream to the right. Both working in synchronization from countless hours of work. Sparks flew over their heads, and fire flicked as the tents caught on fire. The smell of gunpowder grew in the air, fighting against the smoke and vapors.

Red was cackling, shooting off another firework. Watching it explode. Sapnap ducked and wove, his boots snapping under broken glass. He caught flashes of Dream’s hoodie as he did the same.

Sapnap's hands dipped into a burning tent, pulling the flame up like balls of dough. Lighting his fists, fanning the blaze to crawl up his arms. Wrapping around his forearms like snakes. Tightening against his skin, becoming hotter until the fire turned into an icy blue.

There was a reason why Sapnap always kept his arms bare, and as he fanned the flames to run hotter, his fireproof suit began to smoke. He grimaced, feeling the heat take it’s toll on him. He had to make it hotter. The flames began to spread across his whole body.

Dream lunged out of the shadows. His boots slammed as he threw himself forwards at the figure in black and red.

Red dropped the rocket launcher with a yelp. Ducking underneath Dream’s high kick, and then Red’s fist flashed up. Digging into the spot where the dart hit.

Dream let out a yelp. But he regained his footing. Stumbling, when once before he would have remained firm. His arms were up, ready to block or to strike.

The two paused to look at each other. The attack never came. And Red’s head tilted down to look at Dream’s injured leg. “Weakness potions are pog, you know?” Red hummed, his hand dipping into the satchel at his side.

Dream sprung forwards again with a growl. Tiny glowing blue squares started to form around his gloved fingers. They started to take the shape of an object just as Red stepped back. He pulled out a large red metal tube and caught the edge of Dream's mask as he swung. A hollowed ding rang out. The blue pixels scattered, dissipating into the air like sparks.

Red stepped forwards. Pulling a black tube from a clip on the side of the can. A hose at the tip dangled freely. Blue dots swarmed Dream's hands again. And Red slammed the heavy can onto Dream's knee with a sickening crack. Dream only let out a long hiss.

A gloved hand clamped down onto Red's shoulder. Fingers digging into the padded material.

Something cold humming with power was pressed against Red's neck. Not daring to move his head, Red glanced down. The purple netherite sword hummed with power, glowing as dozens of enchantments glowed and created a rainbow of colors. The faint sparkle of blue fading away from the edges.

"It's over," Dream's voice was rough and uneven. "Surrender."

There was a slight pause as Red shifted slightly. "Pull," Red replied. And he ripped the pin out of the fire extinguisher and stabbed it into Dream's leg.

Directly where the dart hit.

Things moved fast after that. Dream shouted, stumbling back. The sword clattered to the ground. Red pulled on the hose of the fire extinguisher, kicking the can with one boot to send it flying out. It slammed into Dream's chest, and he fell onto his back.

"Aim," Red pulled on the hose, yanking the can back with a practiced move. It leapt into his hands. He aimed the nozzle over his shoulder.

Behind Red, a flaming inferno of white hot fire in the vague shape of a human burst out of the tents. "*Dream!*" Sapnap guttered and popped like the flames that enveloped him. And he tore after Red.

"Squeeze," his fingers tightened on the handle on top of the fire extinguisher.

Sapnap's mouth was open in a roar when a blast of white powder hit him in the face. His voice guttered out. Hands flying up to stop the pressure as the force of the extinguisher pushed him back. He tried to stumble away, to hide behind something, but it kept coming.

"And sweep!" Red laughed as he chased Sapnap's figure with the nozzle. "Remember kids, use the P.A.S.S. method with fire extinguishers. Pull, aim, squeeze, and sweep!"

Dream was on his feet, and Red didn't even glance at him. He was swaying back and forth. The weakness potion now fully in his system. He picked up the sword on the ground, and his feet tripped. He stumbled sideways before struggling to get to Red.

Sapnap was choking and gagging, hands up to stop the endless stream of pressurized powder. And Red tilted his head back, cackling madly. He didn't look away as he pulled the can back

and swung. It hit Dream with a hollowed thunk, significantly lighter than before, but it was steel.

Dream dropped, and Sapnap garbled a few words. Red couldn't hear them over the noise and his own maniacal laughter.

"Hey!" A shout broke through the noise, and Red's head whipped to the side. Standing in a doorway, bright red rope burns across his arms, stood George. Orange blonde hair in messy spikes. A furious expression on his face.

His goggles were off.

"Drop it!"

Red's hands were frozen, but it dropped the fire extinguisher with a dull thunk. It sputtered, the nozzle flying up and down until it laid limp on the ground. Spent and empty. Sapnap gasped and coughed, only a few tiny flicks of flame dotting his arms. Dull orange and dying.

"George," Dream gasped, and tried to stand. But his arms barely pushed him up before he fell down again.

"Hands up, above your head." George's voice rang out, and slowly, Red raised his hands above his head. The criminal still stared at George, unmoving. Frozen. "Are you two alright?" George's eyes flicked over to his teammates.

Sapnap was still hacking in the corner, Dream laying on the ground. "We should be asking you that," Dream muttered.

George ran his fingers through his hair and grimaced at the brittle texture. "You guys look horrible."

Sapnap looked like he was going to say something. White dust covered him completely. Then he choked. Devolving into more coughs. Between breaths he grunted, "could say," cough, "the same thing-"

"Shut up." George's lips twisted in a furious frown. He crossed his arms.

"I like the blonde," Dream offered up, and Sapnap choked on a giggle.

"We are not talking about this." George grumbled, pinching the space between his eyes. "Do either of you have handcuffs?"

Dream tried to move his arm, but it only slid a couple of inches. "In my inventory," he offered up.

"Your magic bullshit inventory that only you can access," George tilted his head.

Dream went, "*oh yeah*," like it was some sort of revelation.

Sapnap's coughing fit was dying down, brushing clouds of the white powder off of his clothes. He finally stepped forwards, a cloud following him. He reached into a pocket and pulled out a pair of thick cuffs.

"You, hands out." George snapped his fingers at Red.

The criminal jumped, surprised. "Oh, *me*?" He pointed at himself, his posture uncertain.

"Yes you, idiot." George unclicked a handcuff.

"Oh Prime, I- uh. I'm such a big fan. Um." Red stumbled over his words, flustered. His hands coming up and then fluttering back shyly. "I'm sorry. So sorry about the um, everything. Wow, your eyes are so dark-"

Sapnap snickered and Dream let out a laugh. George dragged a hand down his face. "Seriously? This?"

"You're the one with charming powers," Sapnap hid a smile behind a hand, "I have to admit it's fucking great to see Red fall for it."

"I really am sorry," the words rushed out of Red's mouth, his hands pulling his satchel open. "Here, I have, uh- a gift! Yeah. An apology gift."

"No, fuck. Get your hands out of there." Red's hands leapt out of the bag like there was fire in there. They fumbled around with the top of the bag, trying to close it. "Off, hands *off* the bag. Fucking stupid." Red stopped.

"But um-"

"Hands up!" George stepped forwards, and Red lifted his arms. Holding them out.

"You should watch out, um. For the fire extinguisher." Red nervously spoke, shuffling his feet.

George's eyes flicked down at the empty can at his feet. "Did you rig it?"

"No-"

"Then why should I care?"

"Not that one." Red shuffled his feet. His voice got smaller as he noticed all of the eyes on him. He shrugged. "Look out. For the, um, second one?"

The open satchel launched a red blur that was too fast to catch with the naked eye.

The world exploded in white powder and a deafening boom. The walls and floor shook from the impact. Tossing everyone and anything around it away.

The two heroes tumbled onto the ground, covering their ears. The air was chokingly thick. Filled with a powder that lingered in the air. A second passed. The only sound was the

deafening ringing silence.

A couple of coughs in the distance were muffled.

“George? Sapnap?” Dream’s voice shouted over the ringing. “Are you okay?” He lifted up his head, trying to get up. But his limbs failed him. Numb and dizzy.

“Fine.” Somebody replied that sounded kind of like George. “We’re fine.”

The powder was slowly falling. Dissipating in the air as it was hitting the ground. Like some kind of shitty poisonous snow storm. Thank god for potions. They should definitely not be breathing this in.

There was a shout, and distantly, Sapnap shouted, “*he’s getting away!*” His feet sliding on the fine layer of dust. Dream barely caught sight of Sapnap scrambling onto his feet and racing off.

“Sap-!” His breath caught in this throat, and he let out a croak. “George, he’s-”

George was sliding on the slick surface of the floor, trying to get his shaking legs under him. “I’m going.” It took him a few tries before he was able to stand. And then he was off. Nearly tripping over himself several times as he got used to running in the gunk. White particles falling off of him, leaving a trail behind.

There was a horrible shriek from Sapnap. And George only threw himself faster. “Help!”

George turned the corner and froze at the sight. Red’s back was facing him, straight and lean, as he held a thin rope. The end of it was wrapped around Sapnap’s ankle, a snare pulled tight. It was coiled on a pipe right above an empty window, leaving Sapnap to dangle helplessly in the air, above a fifty foot drop.

“Stop!” George tried, but Red simply cocked his head in George’s direction. “Pull him back in!”

“Oh George,” Red purred, “we both know I have to look at you for your power to affect me. And the second I do that, I’ll just-” and he let an inch of rope slide between his fingers.

Sapnap let out a yell, his hands coming up and hitting nothing but air. “*George!*”

George tensed, his feet sliding a few inches before he had to visibly stop himself. Red let out another laugh. “I haven’t really tormented Sapnap yet, have I?” He reached out and prodded Sapnap with a finger, making the hero sway back and forth. “Want to have a little bit of fun?”

“Stop it! Let him go.” George demanded.

“Let him go?” Red laughed, “hear that, George wants you to fall. Damn.” He jabbed at Sapnap again, who batted at his hand. It caused him to slowly start to spin.

“You know what I meant.” George took another cautious step.

Another inch slid through Red's hand. And Sapnap let out a shriek. Jerking downwards. "I wouldn't do that if I were you. I think the hair dye has been seeping into your brain."

"What do you want?"

"Me?" Red hummed, "how considerate you are to ask me that. To be honest, I thought you'd never ask."

"This isn't what you normally do, Red. Why are you doing this?"

Red tapped his fingers on his thigh. "I'll let you figure that out yourself."

Sapnap tilted his head down and stared at the ground. His eyes widened and his mouth opened. Before he could utter a word, Red rammed a boot into his stomach. He let out a wheeze as his body swung out from the hit.

Then Red let go of the rope.

Sapnap let out a strangled squeak as he disappeared from view.

"No!" George lunged, but he was far too late. He hesitated at the empty space, he turned towards Red, his fists clenched. Fury etched onto his features.

Red took his chance and leapt out the window after Sapnap. A hissing noise followed afterwards, and a thin wire latched onto a neighboring building. He rushed towards the window, the sill jamming into his hips as it stopped him. George caught a glimpse of Red swinging from a grappling gun before he fearfully looked down.

Instead of seeing his friend's broken body on the asphalt below, the cheerful bright colors of a bouncy castle greeted him. The thick plastic jiggled from the impact, waving like a friendly hand in the air. Sapnap laying smack dab in the middle, looking just as shell shocked as George felt.

Slowly, Sapnap held a thumb up to George. And then dropped his arm.

George fell to his own knees in exhausted relief. They weren't in shape to chase after Red, who was, no doubt, running as fast as he could away from here. He was notoriously difficult to catch even when they were at peak health. Sapnap was okay. Dream was probably drugged for the next few hours. But they made it. It's *over*.

George ran his hand through his hair once more, and his nose wrinkled as he felt it crunch. If he ever saw Red again he was going to throw him in a hole so deep Pandora's Vault wouldn't know it existed. Just for messing with his hair. Prime, it would take ages for it to go back to normal.

Tommy sat on the edge of his roof, wet hair sticking to his forehead from the shower he soaked in. The high of a heist had left him hours ago. The night settled in. But he was still wide awake. His thoughts kept him conscious.

He should be happy, right? Tommy should be jumping around in joy and falling asleep with a fucking smile on his face. He had done everything he had been wanting to do for months. He took his favorite heroes and dragged them through the mud. He made them *work*. Tommy laughed and had so much fun.

Why did he feel so *empty*?

Tommy wanted to hold onto the high of facing the Dream Team with both hands. Clutching at it. Keeping it close. But it dissipated like smoke between his fingers. Leaving him feeling hollow. Even more than before. The empty space had known the sensation of being full and now the ache was more apparent.

He stared up at the moon above him. It glowed gently. There were only a few stars poking out of the night sky. It felt like the moon was going through the same thing that Tommy was, alone and drifting aimlessly. Tommy held up a hand up to it. His fingers curled around the orb, trying to pluck it out from the sky.

He stared a moment longer, and then dropped his hand with a sigh.

Things were supposed to be normal by now. Tommy left the Empire behind, and he was supposed to go back to the way things were. He pushed himself to make his scheme over the top. He wanted to force every piece of his life to get back into place. Like pressing two mismatched puzzle pieces until they snapped into one mixed up picture.

It worked. In the euphoria, Tommy thought everything was *perfect* again. But-

When the high came down, Tommy was aimless again.

He should- should find some shit to steal. Yeah! He should make more plans. Do more grandiose schemes. Make them bigger, up the stakes, do *everything* in his power to make that feeling *stay* with him. He could make the fucking market crash! Destroy buildings. Steal the *statue of liberty*! Yes-!

With another sigh Tommy pushes those thoughts out of his head. He was the world's greatest thief. Doing that kind of shit would only get him caught and thrown into a jail somewhere. He needed to stay calm. Level. Do things carefully.

The anger that he lived with barely flared to life. How *dare* Technoblade do this to him. He- he *ruined* Tommy. How could he-?!

The rage sputtered out and died. Leaving Tommy empty. He didn't even have the fire to keep himself angry anymore. He wanted his flock. He wanted Technoblade. He wanted to curl under his arms. It felt so safe there. He wanted to *hear* Technoblade at this point. Just *something*. Please. Anything. Just a hint of him would be enough at this point.

Tears, full of rage and misery, burned in Tommy's eyes. He rested an arm over his face. Blocking the light of the moon above him.

Technoblade's betrayal hurt. The wound was raw and bleeding. Tommy didn't know if it would ever heal, or if he was going to have to deal with this for the rest of his life.

But the distance was hurting even worse.

(Was it really worth it to stay away from his flock? Was this really such a big deal-? Shut up. No, those thoughts were stupid. Of course it was enough. Tommy was strong. Stronger than anybody ever. The biggest of men. He can deal with this.)

(It hurts.)

Tommy wanted to rake his talons down Technoblade's face. He wanted to throw himself into his arms. He wanted to draw blood. Tommy wanted Techno's fingers going through his feathers. He wanted to hurt Technoblade, bite and claw and tear. Tommy wanted to curl up against him and feel his warmth.

Tommy wanted to go back to the cabin. Ignorant. But happy. With his flock right next to him. By his side. With no worries.

He hated that he craved it.

Tommy knew he was wallowing now. But he deserved to let himself do it. He had been trying to avoid it. But it was simply something that couldn't be stopped. He was grieving. He felt sick. He barely ate. He was trying to get back into shape but he couldn't push himself to fully commit to it.

He was officially depressed.

Tommy sniffled a bit, wiping his tears away roughly. In his pocket, his phone buzzed. With a small groan, he fished it out of his pocket and glared at the bright light it emanated. Tubbo's number flashed onto the screen.

For a couple seconds, Tommy considered declining it again. But that would mean he would go back to moping. With a sigh, he answered it. He put this discussion off long enough.

"Hey," his voice was rough and thick. It was only after he answered that Tommy realized it was literally the middle of the night. The moon was large and hanging low in the sky. Why the fuck was Tubbo calling him right now?

"Tommy," Tubbo sounded utterly relieved. "You finally answered."

"Yeah," Tommy already felt exhausted, "I'm sorry about that-"

"I don't care. It's fine, Tommy. I'm just so worried about you. Are you okay?" Tubbo's voice was so painfully honest that Tommy felt a sudden surge of guilt for brushing him off for so long.

"I'm... okay." Tommy sniffed, "I don't know. Going through a lot right now. How's the husband and kid?" He switched the topic.

“Michael is doing great. He’s still talking about his Uncle Tommy.” Tubbo gushed, “he even made a drawing of you and him. We put it on the fridge. The one in our private living area.”

“Aww, you’ll have to send me a picture of it.” Tommy weakly smiled. Michael sounded like a cute kid. Tommy regretted not meeting Tubbo’s kid. Heaven knows, Tubbo dotes on Michael. Tubbo had always wanted to be a different man than his father, and having his own son would drive him. Push him into being a better person.

Tommy admired that about Tubbo. He always looked forward and tried to be better. He dropped being a villain the second he could, meanwhile Tommy *loved* what he did. Leaving Red behind was... unimaginable.

“Actually, maybe you’d like to come over and take a look at it yourself!” Tubbo was enthusiastic. “I cleared out one of the empty spaces in our private suite. You have a room here right with us.”

“I-” Tommy stopped himself, and weakly grimaced, “thank you, Tubbo. I appreciate it. I don’t know how much use it’ll get-”

“Nonsense.” Tubbo brushed Tommy off, “I did some research! See, I looked into things that avian’s like. And I wanted you to like it so I might have gone a bit overboard.” He laughed. “I found some old clothes of ours and I put it together in a nest. You can change it, of course-”

“Wait, *what?*”

“I got you some cool stuff. You’ll have to come by and see! Stuff for your feathers and shit. I can help you. I know you can’t reach the parts near your back. I know you don’t like them touched but I found this neat guide on the internet, I think I can make it nice for you-”

Tommy’s mouth opened, completely at a loss of words. He closed it and then opened it again. “Well, I’m sort of busy right now. So, maybe another time.”

“That’s... okay. I understand. You’re busy. I am too.” Tubbo rolled with it, losing a bit of his enthusiasm. “But hey, I have a couple weeks of time off I can use. Let me know and we can go on a vacation somewhere. You live in Business Bay, right? Boo and I can bring Michael down. And we can have some fun at the beach!”

Honestly, that was a better idea than letting Tubbo drag him back to L’Manburg. “Honestly, that sounds like a lot of fun. I’ll have to check my calendar.” His very empty schedule right now. “But I could show you guys around town. See the sights.”

“I can’t wait! Let me know soon, okay?”

“Sure.” Tommy will be putting it off as long as he can.

There was a slight lull. “So...” Tubbo’s voice was silent, “you left. In the middle of the night.”

Tommy quietly closed and let out a silent sigh. “I’m sorry, T-man. I’m going through things right now. And things got a little bit much for me.”

“You can talk to me. About *anything*. Please, Tommy.” Tubbo said, almost frantically. “You *know* me. What happened? You called me after months of silence and you popped into Pogtopia bloodied and messed up. Your eyes were bleeding.”

Tommy was silent. He could hear Tubbo’s heavy breathing on the other side of the phone. “I...” He let out a choked sob, surprising himself. Fresh stinging tears formed in his eyes. Tommy hadn’t known how painful it was just to *talk* about it, until he was already forming sentences. “I was betrayed. I trusted somebody, and it turns out they just wanted to use me. And I’m just- fuck. I miss them. They were my friend.”

“*Who?*” Tubbo coldly hissed, “who was it?”

“Just...” Tommy waved a hand helplessly in the air, “a guy. Okay? I’m trying to move on from them. And... it’s hard.”

There was a pause. For a second, Tommy thought Tubbo would push more. But instead, Tubbo let out a sigh. “I’m so sorry, Tommy.” Tubbo said, “if there is anything I can do to help, let me know. Please.”

“Yeah.” Tommy angrily wiped away the tears. He was sick of crying. He was tired of feeling bad. “This is just something I have to get through by myself. My stupid brain is stuck in the past.”

“I mean, I already told you. But I have a spare bedroom. If you don’t want to be alone, you can always visit.”

Tommy *didn’t* want to be alone. But he couldn’t stand Tubbo hovering over him. Or watching his “perfect family.” Tubbo had a kid, for Prime’s sake. He couldn’t fit in with them. As much as Tommy would try, a part of him still stayed in that fucking Empire. He could never be happy watching Tubbo with his own family, when his flock was gone.

It would just be an extra knife in the back that Tommy didn’t need.

“I’m okay, for now.” Tommy sniffled, the sound ugly. “I think I just need time. Tell me what you’re up to.” He couldn’t talk about this any longer.

There was a long pause.

“You know, I’ll do anything for you, Tommy.” Tubbo said, his voice serious. “Anything. If you want this guy gone, I’ll take care of it. You want him thrown into prison? Or just missing? I’ll do it. Without hesitation. You’re my brother, Tommy.”

Tommy laughed, the noise bubbling up out of him. Making the weight on his chest lighter. “I know, Tubs. I’ll do the same for you. Just say the word.” He grinned, staring up at the moon looming above him. It looked clear and bright. “Anyways, tell me things. Catch me up.”

They talked. They spoke about the little things. Like how Michael was running around with no pants on for a few hours before Tubbo and Ranboo managed to corner him. Tommy regaled how a supermarket tried to scam him out of a 15% off coupon he tried to use. Which

was fucking stupid. Tommy got that shitty coupon *two days ago*. Despite the offer expiring a month prior.

The moon rose up above the skyline, shining down on Tommy as he talked and laughed, catching up with his best friend. Tubbo's voice grew lighter as time went on, and Tommy could feel himself starting to relax.

He hadn't felt this light in a minute. As Tommy talked about meaningless things, he felt... okay again. He could see a glimmer of the future. Where he wasn't trapped in a cycle of misery. Sure, his heart still ached. But Tommy could move on. And he *will*.

It'll just take time.

It might always hurt. But Tommy is strong enough. He can live with it. In fact, he will *thrive*. He's certain. This was just a sign that it'll get better.

"Fuck," Tommy drawled, blinking as he noticed the sky turning a lighter color. The dark blue being touched with pink. "It's morning. I didn't mean to talk so long." His eyes felt heavy. He had spent all day setting up the abandoned office building, not to mention fighting the heroes was taxing. And he had spent the entire night rambling.

"Oh no..." Tubbo yawned over the phone. "I didn't even notice. I haven't been able to talk with you like this in such a long time..."

"Yeah. I've missed this." It was the truth. "I miss you."

"So just fucking come over," Tubbo grumbled, but there was a hint of a smile in his voice.

"I'm busy," Tommy shot back, and he heard Tubbo huff. "But I need to pass out. Thanks for chatting with me, Tubs."

"Any time, Toms."

"Bye," Tommy waited until Tubbo echoed his goodbye and pulled the phone from his cheek, ending the call. He stared up at the sky. The stars flickering out as the sun began to rise. He set the phone down on his chest, feeling like things will get better. It has to be. He made the 'first step on the path of healing,' as Tub's would say.

After a few more minutes, Tommy groaned and sat up. His phone fell onto his lap heavily. "I need to sleep," he hummed to himself, dazed. "Bedtime, bedtime. Gonna go to my nest." He stumbled down the roof. He yawned deeply. His feet found the ladder descending to his balcony, and he stumbled through the door into his nest.

Tommy tossed his phone onto a random cushion and closed the door with a kick. And he flopped into his nest. His nose dug into a blanket, and Tommy grunted. Exhausted. After a few seconds, he finally shifted so it was a bit more comfortable. Pulling in a stray pillow to hug.

His eyes fluttered just for a few more seconds before he completely passed out.

Tommy's eyes fluttered as he opened them. A familiar scene greeted him. Dark green hedges loomed over him, and Tommy sat on the edge of a fountain. Water trickled behind him. He hummed, closing his eyes. It never felt real, these dreams. Time passed using eternity as seconds.

His fingers idly traced the marble. Waiting for Kristin. Sometimes she showed, but it was rare. He missed her. His real flock. But she was a busy... goddess? Who really knew what she was. She never replied when Tommy asked. But then again, he was always knocked into his instincts at the sight of her.

His memories of her were always slightly fuzzy at the edges. But the phantom feeling of her brushing his hair back, her laughter as Tommy leaned into her touch, her soft words that held no meaning but it was full of fondness.

Would Kristin be disappointed in him? After everything? Tommy fucked up. Majorly. He gained a member of his flock without her knowledge. The thought of her staring down at him with dismayed expression would *crush* him.

Tommy could shrivel up and die the second he made her upset.

His fingers traced the pattern in the marble. The ribbons of white that traveled through the black rock. Slumping over, dejectedly.

A second passed.

An eternity crept by.

Water flowed from the fountain from behind him. But even with the constant noise, Tommy heard the slight noise of footsteps scraping on stone.

Lightning buzzed through him. Entering his stomach with utter glee and lighting up his nerves. *Kristin!* His heart felt full to bursting. His breath hitched as jumped to his feet. Turning around, a thrilled chirp on the edge of his smiling lips.

Flock!

His breath caught in his throat, choking him as his eyes landed on the figure standing in the opening of the maze. Shadows seemed to rise up and dissipate off of the tailored suit like mist.

“Hello, mate.” The Angel of Death's lips twisted in a cold smile, “I've been looking for you.”

Chapter End Notes

Tommy: no fear

Phil: hooty hoo hello sonboy

Tommy: one fear

No fire extinguishers have been harmed in the making of this chapter.

Also quick PSA for fire extinguishers- do not inhale their contents. VERY POISONOUS. Do not launch them at high velocity. VERY EXPLODY.

beginning of arc 2

Chapter Summary

i bet this email has given you a heart attack.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

A deep noise. Much like a drum, thick and deep, resonated in Tommy's chest. It beat once, twice, three times- and continued. And in the distance, where nothing lay, stars began to disappear. A thick shape. Dark. Massive.

With each reverberation it seemed to flash. Not disappearing, no, but it grew.

Closer.

What felt like an hour flew by in seconds, time twisting frantically back and forth like a serpent caught in a trap. Tommy blinked twice before it came into focus. His heart beat thumped for a year. He could only watch as the thing rapidly grew.

It wasn't until the stars blinked out when he finally recognized what it was. A sprawling manor, with perfectly aged shingles and a tower raised up high. It looked like it could come out of an eighteenth century movie.

Its door was open.

A black hole. There was no light. But it was the antithesis of it. Much like how a flashlight would share its beam, this *oozed* darkness.

There were no lights on in the windows.

The drum beat twice more. The maw flashed. Darkness reaching out.

A shrieking wail of wind hit Tommy's face. And he closed his eyes and recoiled. Physically covering his head from the sudden onslaught. Feverish bitter cold nipping at his eyes and ears. Tommy gasped out, but the noise was startling loud. For just as sudden as the wind hit, it moved past him and faded away. Like it never came to be. Leaving him in stunned silence.

Behind him, a latch clicked.

Tommy opened his eyes. Gone were the rows of dark hedges. The fountain's noise was missing. Instead, he was in the manor. A sweeping double door, rich with inlays and carved shapes that were pleasing to the eye, was behind him. The rest of the room was just as rich.

Carved marble flooring, the same stone cut as the fountain was. Thick, plush, carpet stretching over the floors. Walls decorated with paintings of people that looked old and expensive.

It was all rather ugly, was Tommy's first thought.

His second came out of his mouth, "what the *fuck*."

"Why don't you have a seat?" The voice came from his side, and Tommy whirled around. Facing the threat. The Angel sat in one of the plush armchairs, the kind that grandma's liked to collect in their homes. Not very comfortable, but regal looking. A delicate saucer in one hand, a porcelain floral teacup in the other.

"Uh," Tommy spoke, "no."

He was so fucking eloquent. Take that, rich snob.

Tommy was better at running away than talking. He took a step back and turned sharply, ready to throw himself at the doors. But shock froze his stride. The doors were gone. And in their place was a wallpapered flat... wall.

"Come now, don't be shy, Theseus." Angel placed the teacup on the saucer with a sharp tap. Tommy turned back to face him. Unwilling to keep his back towards the villain. To the *predator*.

His wings were hidden. But the very thought of Angel being close to his unprotected back, to Tommy's wings. It sent shivers down his spine. The bird in his brain felt muted in this place. Almost like it was asleep. But it still prickled with danger at the sight of The Angel of Death.

Tommy's answer was silent. Taking another step back until his spine hit the wall. His eyes darted around. But always returning back to the man sitting in the chair. There was a doorway to his right. The Angel put the cup down.

"I would say, 'don't even bother,' but..." The Angel finally turned to look at Tommy, his lips curling up. Revealing the sharp fangs. "I'm not feeling particularly kind today, Theseus."

Tommy bolted.

Thick carpet dug under his socks. His feet sinking in with every step. Tommy didn't know where he was going. Simply- away. He pushed himself. He was familiar with that sensation. Except this time, instead of a couple of huffy heroes, there was a very deadly threat.

It was like the egg all over again. Fuck.

Far too quickly, his throat dried up. And Tommy's lungs burned. He hadn't- he- fuck- he wasn't in fucking shape. He- ugh! His stamina was fucking shot. Even now. He could taste the slightly sweet flavor of blood and sweat.

Doorways made of the same wood as the front door passed him in a blur. Dark wood, polished to gleam, fancy doorknobs made of burnished metal. Tommy wasn't looking for

doors. He was looking for a fucking *window* . Something to throw himself out of. Glass be damned.

There was not a single one.

Tommy threw open a door. A dining room. No window. He turned a corner. Did it again. No window. Tommy wanted to scream. Instead, he let out a stream of curses. Turning back to run. But instead caught the sight of a figure, and it was sheer instinct that allowed him to evade the hand that shot out.

Unbalanced, Tommy stumbled back, his back hitting the edge of the mahogany table. His feet felt heavy and he almost tripped over them before his backpedaling suddenly stopped. Tommy glanced around the richly decorated room that felt not-real but all too realistic. On instinct, Tommy tried to See but- but- *nothing happened*.

He had no powers here.

“Come now, I am not that scary, am I?” Angel of Death said with a soft smile, approaching Tommy with even steps. “This isn’t *real*. Nothing can hurt you here. I promise.”

“Get- get the fuck away from me.” Tommy gasped out, holding out a hand as if he could ward off the evil that was heading directly to him. The table stopped him for only a few moments, but he could see how the distance between the two of them was quickly shrinking. He didn’t waste another second, Tommy threw himself over the top of the table awkwardly. His hip banged on the wood painfully.

Talons, dark and black, dug into the table a second after Tommy slid over it. “Come now,” Angel said, and he bared his teeth in a smile that exposed his sharp teeth, “give me a second to talk to you before you try to run away. It won’t take long.”

“Hell no.” Tommy spat out, and the villain had the audacity to *roll his eyes* at his response.

“We both know how this will end,” Angel leaned on the table with his elbows, a picture of a relaxed and unconcerned man. “Save us both the trouble and sit down.”

The dude was a psychopath.

Tommy didn’t even answer. Instead he fainted to the left before dodging to the right. His sneakers slipping on the tilted ground as his balance shifted. He is fucking *nimble*. Tommy passed through one of the endless open doorways and down another hallway. It never ended. Even as Tommy’s legs pumped up and down, every doorway seemingly went to a new room. Tommy couldn’t even find a fucking *window*.

All it took was a moment of distraction. Through the seeming infinite hallways, Tommy took a second too long, the hint of hesitation, when claws hooked into his shirt and *yanked*.

Tommy was yeeted onto the ground so hard the breath left his lungs. Before he could move, his shoulder was grabbed and he was flipped face first onto the floor. Tommy’s nose burned as it was buried in the carpet. A heavy weight pressing down on his back. His breath left his

lungs, and all he could get out was a protesting grunt before the weight pushed harder against his spine.

“Catching you this time was easier,” Angel whispered in his ear, his hot breath moving Tommy’s hair and tickling his skin. “Don’t you go running off before I’m finished with you again.” Angel laughed with an edge of malice.

If Tommy had breath in his lungs, he would certainly have something to tell Angel of Death. Instead he struggled to suck in some air.

“Now,” the Angel said, shifting slightly to rise from the crouch over Tommy, “where was it?”

What?

Tommy’s lungs finally got the memo and sucked in a bit of air, and he was far more preoccupied by breathing to notice Angel frisking him. Gently patting him down, focusing on his wrists and hands until his hand cupped his neck. “There it is,” Angel of Death hummed, pleased, as he plucked at the chain around Tommy’s neck.

Even though Tommy was able to breathe again, it felt like the air had been stolen from his lungs. He struggled, weakly trying to push up to get some kind of leverage to move- but the knee pressed up against his back pushed only harder.

The chain was slowly dragged up, and Tommy felt the pendant catch at the collar of his shirt before it was gently yanked free. His breathing came faster as Angel hummed a nameless tune. Tommy’s only warning was the subtle shift on the chain as the villain adjusted his grip and *yanked*.

The chain snapped in two.

Tommy jolted, and his instincts which had been muted so far suddenly hit him like a train. He bucked up, almost like a horse unwillingly participating in a rodeo. His wings were free. *His wings were free*. They flapped wildly in his attempt to escape. Hoping to dislodge the unwanted predator from his back.

One of his wings was caught in a taloned hand. And Tommy froze. Fear coursing through him. The Angel of Death had the perfect opportunity to rip it off of him. If he just stayed very, *very* motionless, maybe he could avoid it.

“There’s a good boy,” Angel crooned above him, “hold still. I just want to look.”

Tommy swallowed a soft pleading chirp, and everything inside of him screamed at him to freeze. A predator had his hands on one of the most vulnerable spots on his body. And it was terrifying. His adrenaline shot through the roof, and yet Tommy could only stare blankly at the carpet as Angel pried his wing open.

“Oh, you really are a little one, aren’t you?” Angel sounded fucking amused, and Tommy could only focus on the talons that wrapped around the delicate hollow bones. Waiting,

fearing, for the moment when they are crushed. “Look at this, you still have some down feathers. You’re not much older than sixteen, aren’t you?”

Tommy couldn’t speak. A cold heat spreading across his neck and back, as his body broke into a sweat. His fingers digging into the thick carpet. His mouth was full of spit- he didn’t even dare swallow. *Predator*.

“Oh, look at how small your primaries are.” Angel sighed, and Tommy could feel him thumbing through the feathers lightly. Resting a talon on Tommy’s primary feathers. “You really are just a kid, aren’t you.”

If Tommy’s jaw wasn’t locked, he might have said something in protest.

“You are a songbird,” Angel continued his fucking monologue, “see right here? At the tip of this wing, you’d have a talon if you were a predator avian.” A part of Tommy’s wing, where he normally folds it, was rubbed gently. And Tommy shivered from the light touch.

Those sharp talons dipped into Tommy’s feathers and began to *preen*. Nudging the feathers back into place and gently scratching at the thin skin underneath. The Angel was preening Tommy with ease and practice.

It took a second for it to really hit Tommy that this was actually fucking happening. The second it did, the bird inside of Tommy’s head protested. It let out a panicked screech, and Tommy jolted from the touch. He let out a strangled squawk. Bucking up, his wings flaring out and flapping wildly. Trying to pull his limbs out of the Angel’s grip. The hand tightened on his hollow bones. And there was a soft *click click click* and Tommy’s body stiffened up again.

“There you go, mate.” Angel hummed, “just relax. I’m just helping a bit. Your wings haven’t been oiled properly. Your feathers are in a rough shape.”

Tommy’s jaw was stiff but he still bit out a soft, “fuck you.”

Angel laughed. “You are a spit fire. Techno wasn’t lying about that. I can’t wait to see how you react when you two meet again. Will you be as brave as you try to pretend to be? Or will you go running back into his arms?”

Tommy won’t be doing *jack shit*. Anger bubbled up and it finally broke the frozen dam of terror that seemingly muffled the rest of his emotions. How dare this fucker come to him and talk to Tommy like that? Angel of Death? More like Angel of No Personal Boundaries.

It was nothing like the noise that Angel made. But a death rattle began to hum inside of Tommy’s ribs. Rising up and-

Tommy twisted and lashed out. His own talons, small and golden tipped, cut through the air. They sank into flesh. Ripping. Blood ran down Tommy’s fingers, as the Angel of Death rose one hand up to touch the three gashes on the side of his face. A stunned look mirrored the one that Tommy wore.

He had-

Tommy did-

Oh shit Tommy was going to *die*.

Angel withdrew his hand, staring down at the red blood that beaded on his own dark talons. His eyes shrunk into slits, and then dilated suddenly. Expanding like dinner plates.

The Angel of Death smiled. His lips twisting up, revealing fangs far bigger than Tommy's, as he stared at Tommy with glee. "How interesting," Philza crooned, and licked the blood off his claws.

Tommy woke up.

Tommy sat up with a strangled *gasp*. Eyes darting wildly around his messy nest. But as Tommy gathered his scrambled wits, pressing a hand to his chest where his heart hammered away. Instead of facing the Angel of Death, he was alone in his apartment. Safe. It was just a dream?

No. It hadn't. Tommy felt the knowledge of it sink into his bones. That had been real. As real as Kristin was.

Somehow, the Angel had access to him in that realm. And it made Tommy tremble at the thought.

Tommy stared down at his hands. There wasn't any blood on them. There aren't any remains of the nightmare lingering in the real world. Tommy tore the chain off around his neck and examined his wings, but found they were untouched and as messy as ever.

It was a barely small comfort. The knowledge that whatever happened in the dream world didn't transfer to the waking one. Whatever the Angel did to Tommy, whether it be torture or some other sick game, wasn't *real*.

It still unsettled him. Like sand under his skin, itching and rubbing into his joints. Tommy's heart rate refused to lower. His anxiety ratchet up a notch the longer he held still. He dug his hands into the mounds of pillows and blankets that made up his nest, finding his beaten up phone.

It had only been a handful of hours since he hung up with Tubbo. He could still feel the exhaustion weighing his limbs down. Yesterday's chaos felt like a distant memory. Tommy couldn't stay here. The walls seemed too close. The air was too hot. He needed something to *do*.

With a quick press of his fingers, his phone started to call. It was stupidly early in the morning, and it was a slim chance that Purpled would be awake. But luck was on his side.

A wide awake voice answered, "Red, what is it?"

“I need a job.” Tommy spoke, “I don’t care what it is. Just get me one, please.”

“I heard what you did to the Dream Team last night, shouldn’t you want a break?” Purpled spoke.

“I just need a job. I don’t care if it’s boring or simple. Okay?”

Purpled hummed, and Tommy could hear his fingers hitting a keyboard. “I’ll get back to you in a couple of hours. I’ll find you something worthwhile.”

Tommy muttered his thanks and hung up. He tossed his phone back into his nest and he got to his feet. His blood was still racing. And he would drive himself up the walls if he stayed in his apartment.

Instead, he shoved his feet into a pair of worn out sneakers and left. Last night was eye-opening to how rusty he truly had gotten. And out of shape Tommy had become. Now was as good a time as any to start running again.

The door slammed shut behind him and Tommy started jogging.

There were very few places on the planet that were considered neutral. Every country had several grievances with each other. It was similar to a high school clique gossiping, the respective groups side eyeing everybody and whispering razor sharp words to another. The tangled amount of alliances with each country was mind boggling, and it was impossible to find a place that could be impartial to all of those who were summoned.

After the last time a world ending crisis appeared, and it had been more of a fight to gather all of those in charge than defeating the evil, something had to be done. There had to be a place that was created to give each country an equal amount of safety.

Once it was clear that there wasn’t such a place on Earth, the only logical thing was to look *off the planet*.

Fundy hated being in space.

The artificial gravity made the fur on his tail stand up. There was a type of *wrongness* that filled the unnaturally cycled air filters in the space station. He wouldn’t be caught dead in this place.

And yet, as the teleporter whined down after successfully snatching him up from the street, here he was. He had visited the space station approximately four times in his career. And every time he swears he would never come back.

This marked the fifth time. And Fundy was unimpressed.

He stepped off the high tech platform, and he felt the walls subtly inching inwards as if to close themselves around him. The urge to curl his lips back and bare his teeth was powerful. But instead, he adjusted the trench coat wrapping around his frame as he scanned the room.

People didn't like full animal hybrids. The stigma surrounding them was fucking stupid. Fundy looked more like a fox than a human, but he was still *human*. Five fingers on each hand, opposable thumbs, ect. He would only get odd and judgmental looks if he acted on his instincts, only feeding into the gossip that the Guild shouldn't have let Fundy into their organization. He swallowed the growl, but displayed the nasty scowl.

Fuck them all.

"Well, well, well, look what the *fox* brought in" Fundy couldn't conceal the displeased twitch of his lips as Sapnap clapped a hot hand against his back, "Fundy! It's been forever! I haven't seen you here in ages."

"Yep." Fundy trailed his eyes across the room, and his fingers twitched to hold nicotine. A habit he kicked ages ago, and yet being surrounded by heroes always brought the urge up. "Mandatory meetings tend to force me out of my hovel."

Sapnap threw an arm around Fundy's shoulders, pressing his weight down. He laughed, "hovel is certainly the right word to call it. How is your patrol, by the way? Still doing freelance?"

Fundy stopped following the patrol that the Guild required him to complete years ago. And Sapnap knew that. Foolish took up the job, the literal god didn't mind the extra work. It wasn't like Foolish could sleep. He liked to keep busy.

It wasn't like Fundy was sitting on his ass the whole time. "It's work." Fundy's clipped and short answer was all he gave, before ducking under Sapnap's arm. "Is the meeting in the usual room?"

The shadows moved and Fundy didn't look at them. He adjusted the hat on his head instead.

Dream was here then. Darkness always clung to him.

"Yeah." Sapnap trailed after Fundy, "Dream wanted me to let anybody arriving we need to back the rest of the members of the guild, no matter what. This is a..." Sapnap's nose wrinkled as he said, "*inclusive* meeting."

Fundy wasn't surprised. The world always liked to fuck him over. It was just his horrible luck that he was specifically summoned to a shitty meeting with scum. "Which villains?" Fundy hoped that *he* wasn't here-

"Hermits, mostly. They sent up Xisuma to represent them. Artificer is here." Sapnap spoke quickly, "and The Queen is as well."

Fundy couldn't allow himself to feel relief. Not when he could feel the headache start to build at the mention of Queen. This meeting would be passive aggressive as shit.

But somewhere, in the deep dark recesses of where his soul once resided, Fundy was grateful that it was just those three. But for a meeting like this, with the troubling message that flashed on Fundy's communicator, there should have been a fourth party. "Syndicate?"

“Oh, their invite got lost in the mail.” Sapnap said lightly, but the teasing grin he shot Fundy told stories. “We’ll send them a transcript. If we have the time. But it’s been crazy busy these days.” He winked at Fundy.

Fundy snorted at that. Oh, the Syndicate would not like being left out like this. And it brought a small part of amusement to him. Siren would have been frothing at the mouth to join, just to poke and prod at the heroes. It’s a pity that a majority of the Guild hated him fiercely after some of the stunts Siren pulled.

His blood curdled with anger that the thought that Siren could get out of the Empire now. The borders opening up meant the bastard could leisurely waltz out of his self-made prison, and Fundy itched to pound that crooked smirk from Siren’s face.

But now Siren had free reign. As long as he stayed within the borders of the friendly countries, he was safe.

The second Siren stepped out of countries that tolerate scum like him, he would be arrested. If it wasn’t Fundy who did the deed, there were dozens of other heroes that held a deep grudge. They would do it in a heartbeat.

“Thanks,” Fundy said, the word was heavy on his tongue. He didn’t say it very often. But he was grateful that the Syndicate didn’t show up. The Guild knew of Fundy’s tumultuous relationship with them, and it was a small kindness that they remembered and kept the villains away from him, Fundy, one of the admittedly worst heroes that they had on their team.

That, or they didn’t want to deal with the assholes. Inviting the Syndicate into the Guild’s headquarters was truly a terrible decision.

“Anytime!” Sapnap paused at the double doors that lead to the meeting room. “Chin up, Fundy. You’re going to save the world.”

“Right,” Fundy dryly, “like I haven’t done it a dozen times already.”

Sapnap laughed, and slapped Fundy’s back, “first time for everything! Also, don’t ask George about his hair. He’s grumpy about it.” And then he slipped through the door, leaving Fundy in the hallway.

“I wasn’t joking about that,” Fundy said to himself, and rolled his eyes. It wasn’t like anybody would believe him if he told them. He followed Sapnap into the room, his tail flicking out in distaste. He hated being here. And this meeting was going to drive him up the wall.

Well, Fundy made a choice to accept the invite. He gave his coordinates for the teleporter. He accepted this was going to be a headache. But it didn’t make him feel any better about it.

But then again, it wasn’t every day he was called to an emergency meeting about the pending apocalypse.

At least Fundy had a warning this time.

Chapter End Notes

Fundy: i hate all of you.

Sapnap: even me? :beggingcutely:

Fundy: i wont hesitate bitch.

We FINALLY get to see Fundy. Took me two years to get to him. Rip.

I recently had my birthday and so this chapter is the equivalent of me bringing cupcakes to share with the class. My birthday gift to you.

Chapters are still going to be very infrequent and spaced apart still. However I have decided that I will be uploading the "bloopers" of KTY, AKA, the scenes that got cut or things I rewrote, so keep an eye out for that. I'll put the new fic in a separate series called The Gambit.

Again, I'm going to say this. If you bug me to update I'm going to Not Do That. It Demotivates Me. I understand that you really like this fic, but asking for more after I just gave you some invalidates me. And it Kinda Sucks.

Thanks, and I hope you enjoyed the new chapter.

End Notes

What am I doing here? I have gone through the five stages of grief and I landed on acceptance as I published this. I can't- I literally cannot believe that I am writing minecraft fanfiction. I debated whether or not if I wanted to make this anonymous. But fuck it, if I'm going to write it then people will know who sits upon the throne of this piece of garbage fic.

I am supposed to be in the Harry Potter fandom?!? This out of my comfort zone.

My friend, Bitsinboots, author of Secret of Being Colorful and I have made a discord (MULTIFANDOM NOW as of April 2024) server together. It is a 15+ age server. And it's a dictatorship. But if you'd like to come hang out with us, feel free. Here is the [discord link](#).

Works inspired by this one

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[Golden wings](#) by Anonymous

[Of Wasted Life and Blooming Dreams](#) by [angst_is_some_good_shit](#)

[Though the wind and the rain, Anything for you.](#) by [orphan_account](#)

[In the Heart of Silence](#) by [Fallen_Sanity \(orphan_account\)](#)

[I thought I managed the risk pretty well](#) by [MySleepyStars](#)

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